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I N D I A

AND

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INDIA is no longer the land of enchantment and romance—of exaggeration and wonder. It has been transferred from the realms of fancy to that of fact. For nearly a century its interests, real or supposed, have afforded topics for discussion to parliamentary orators and ephemeral writers. During that period, the readers of political journals have been at intervals excited by startling intelligence from the East, often of successes the most astonishing and unexpected, occasionally of reverses equally unlooked for. At one time our isle has been “frighted from its propriety” by denunciations of delinquency in the high places of India, at another, the tax-bearing people of Great Britain have been encouraged to look for relief to a country which the imagination pictured as the seat of riches, which no extravagance could exhaust, though exercised through as many millions of years as Hindoo chronology claims for the age of the earth. Gradually, however, the public mind settled down to more sober views, and at present there

seems more danger of the value and importance of India being underrated, than of their being estimated at an undue height.

As to the extent of country properly comprehended under the name of India, opinions may differ. In conformity with popular acceptance, its boundaries may be assumed as follows — On the north, the mountains which form for a part of the line the southern boundary of Nepaul, and for the remainder, that of Chinese Tartary, on the south, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, on the east, the territories constituting the Burman empire, and on the west, the river Indus for the more northern part, and the ocean for the southern. The country thus bounded extends into twenty-four degrees of latitude, and as many of longitude, and is estimated to contain a million and a quarter of square miles. Much of the land within this vast area is to be classed among the most fertile in the world, and it is overspread by an active and industrious population, the number of which cannot be reckoned at less than a hundred and fifty millions. The soil and climate are peculiarly suited to the production of various commodities, some of which are of high price, and some in universal demand. Among the latter may be mentioned cotton and sugar. Cotton might be produced in India to any extent that even the devouring appetite of the manufacturing districts of England and Scotland is likely to claim, and sugar to meet the demands of the whole world. The larger portion of this great and rich country renders homage to the Queen of Great Britain, and much of the remainder, though under princes nominally independent, is practically subject to the British Government.

For three centuries England has been endeavouring to extend its colonial dependencies. Myriads of Englishmen

have quitted their native shores for the desolate wastes of distant climes, there to extend the foundations of their country's greatness, and raise new out-posts for its maintenance. The reign of George III witnessed the violent severance of the better portion of these offshoots from the parent stock. The North American colonies dissolved their connection with the land whence they had sprung, and the country which had previously constituted a main arm of the strength of Great Britain was thenceforward to become permanently a commercial rival, sometimes a political enemy. But the loss which was sustained in the West was compensated in the East. About the time when indications of the approaching conflict with America began to appear, the English in India exchanged the character of tenants of circumscribed factories for that of lords of extensive provinces. At the time when, after an inglorious war, the reluctant consent of the British sovereign was extorted to the acknowledgment of American independence, some additions had been made to the first acquisition, and before the close of his reign the British were paramount in India, exercising positive rule over the better part of the country, holding military possession of a portion of the rest, and overawing, by their predominant power and influence, the whole. It would be idle to discuss whether India is a colony or not. If not a colony, it is something better. If it be desirable to occupy distant lands in the name of England, slowly and laboriously, and at vast expense, to establish civilized communities in dependence upon the country which sends them forth, how much more desirable must it be to receive the transfer of a country, not only of immense extent, but of almost unbounded capacity of production, the natural fertility of which has been increased by the sedulous culture of ages, and where nothing is

wanting but that reformation in the "spirit of man," and that security to life, property, and industry, which European rule and that alone is able to give "Ships, colonies, and commerce," were the objects declared to be specially sought by the man to whose genius and good fortune Europe, with one exception, succumbed That exception was found in the country which, small in its extent, and limited in its natural resources, was mighty in the spirit of its sons, by whose courage and enterprise it had spread its limbs into every clime and covered every sea with its ships, richly freighted to meet the wants of every people Napoleon, at least, understood the value of India, and happy would he have been to have wrested this precious possession from the "nation of shop-keepers," whom he at once despised, envied, hated, and feared

India gives to Great Britain a vast accession of political power in reference to the other nations of Europe If it were lost, the amount of loss would be incalculable and irretrievable There is no empire on the opposite side of the world to be gained to compensate the privation, as was the case when the American colonies of Great Britain renounced their allegiance If the British possessions of India were again overrun by native powers, the loss of them would be deeply felt, if transferred, in whole or in part, to any European rival, it would be felt still more deeply, inasmuch as that rival, whoever it might be, would gain to the extent of our loss The loss in reputation would be greater even than that of dominion, and Great Britain would sink in the scale of European nations from a first to a third or fourth rate power In this humble position, moreover, we must not expect to pursue our trade with India as now The restoration of native governments would restore all the uncertainty, the vexation, the tyranny, and extortion

which they were wont to exercise towards merchants, and which they still exercise wherever they are not controlled or overawed by British influence. If the territory lost to England passed into European hands, our prospects would scarcely be better, seeing the almost universal jealousy of our trade which pervades Europe, and the wide-spreading confederacies which are formed against it. India now receives annually upwards of £5,000,000 in value of our manufactures. How much would be taken if our political connection were severed? India now affords employment to upwards of 200,000 tons of our shipping. What amount of tonnage would be thus occupied were the power of Great Britain not paramount in that country? The civil and military services of India open honourable sources of employment to many thousand Englishmen, all of them finding therein respectable means of subsistence, and some of them returning to their native land with decent competency for future years. Besides this, India remits annually a tribute of £3,200,000, to meet charges of various kinds defrayed at home. Among these charges are the dividends on East-India Stock, and the interest on East-India Bonds. Were India lost, what would be the fate of these dividends and this interest? Either the claimants must lose their property, or the nation must take the charge upon itself. Would the creditors of India be satisfied with the former branch of the alternative? Would the people of England, already complaining heavily of the pressure of taxation, and recently extricated from heavy financial embarrassment only by the re-establishment of an impost peculiarly offensive, and on that account always understood to be a special reserve for periods of war—would the people of England, thus taxed, thus relieved, be likely to submit to the latter? Would the millions who are *not* creditors

of India, but who would share in the common evils resulting from its loss, if lost unhappily it should be, be willing to take upon themselves the additional loss of the hundreds who *are* creditors? This is a question which, when the good government of India is concerned, should, in common prudence, never be absent from the minds of those who have a direct pecuniary interest in maintaining the existing relations between that country and England

Besides the holders of East-India Stock and the bond creditors of the East-India Company, there is another class of persons interested in like manner in maintaining the peace and security of India in dependance upon Great Britain—the creditors under the various loans raised by the Indian Government at various times for various public objects. Part of these creditors are natives of India, or residents in that country, but part also are European born, and resident here. The interest upon their capital invested in India is remitted through private sources, and its amount is not readily ascertainable, it is, however, large. To the head of private remittances, must also be added the savings of individuals in India sent or brought home for investment, and the whole must be combined with the sums remitted for public purposes, before we can know the total amount of the wealth which India annually renders to her European protector in return for the advantages bestowed on her by the connection. Politically, commercially, and financially, then, the safety of India is an object of paramount importance to Great Britain. Territory, power, and wealth are the adjuncts of the connection, and unless infatuation, like that which lost America, prevail, every effort will be made to preserve it. Territory equal in extent to Europe, if the dominions of Russia, Sweden, and Denmark be excluded, power rivalling that of Rome in its

brightest days, and surpassing that of any other country whose history is on record, wealth in all the abundance that can flow from natural advantages improved by active commerce, these are the gifts of India to Great Britain, and the full measure of their value is not yet enjoyed Under British protection. India will become every year more settled, more peaceful, more industrious, and more prosperous Its territory will receive the advantages of better cultivation, its revenue will increase, its facilities for commercial intercourse will be multiplied and extended, it will become more free from internal commotion and less readily assailable by external force, all British institutions there will require that stability which time only can bestow, and while the possession of this noble appanage of Great Britain may still excite, as it has before excited, the envy of other powers—though such feeling may increase with the advance of that whereon it feeds, it will but become more impotent as India shall become more valuable and more closely bound to the country which is destined, as we trust, to be the instrument of promoting—gradually and safely, but not less surely—its progress in all that can conduce to its permanent happiness

Most extraordinary is the subjection of India to Great Britain It is extraordinary in its origin and progress, for the dominion was not sought, but almost forced on the possessor It is the result, not of any deeply laid plan of policy, but of circumstances which no one could or did foresee It is extraordinary, again, in regard to the means by which the dependant country has been brought into obedience to its superior, and by which the authority of the latter is maintained The instrument by which these objects have been effected is an army, commanded, indeed, by British officers, but composed of native troops

—of men differing from those whom they serve in descent, in language, in creed, in modes of thought, in habits of life—in every thing, in short, in which man can differ from man,—some of them fierce and fanatical in the extreme, all of them intensely imbued with prejudice, calculated to shock the feelings of their rulers on the one hand, and on the other, to render those rulers objects of contempt to the masses below them—yet all rendering prompt and cheerful obedience, patient under privation, brave in action, in all situations dutiful, and even affectionate, where not irritated by ill-treatment. Such is the army of India—such is the composition of that force which has been the chief instrument of winning for Great Britain its gorgeous eastern empire. Before the experiment was made, such an army would have been judged to be but a rope of sand, yet it is by an agency which, while untried, must have been deemed so unsuitable to the purpose, that Divine Providence has transferred the sceptre of India from Mahometan and Hindoo rulers, born in the land in which they held sway, to the Christian sovereign of a small kingdom, distant thousands of miles.

The extraordinary circumstances which mark this connection do not end here. Not only is it, in ordinary language, accidental, but it is anomalous. Great empires have arisen from small beginnings. The sword of the conqueror has sometimes been rapid as well as widely sweeping in its achievements. But India has been added to the dominions of the British crown, not by the wisdom or the good fortune of the servants of that Crown—of its acknowledged and accredited ministers—but by the labours of a small and, for a long period, an obscure body of British subjects, who, seeking for themselves the profits of mercantile adventure, have given to their country the most magnificent boon ever bestowed.

At the very close of the sixteenth century, a period when the commercial spirit was superseding that passion for military adventure which formed the distinguishing feature of the middle ages, but when commerce itself, as Coleridge has observed, partook of the character of romance, a small association of merchants, stimulated by the successes of the Portuguese and the Dutch, obtained a charter from the Crown for carrying on an exclusive trade with India. At this time, when the authority of the Crown, though theoretically subjected to constitutional checks, was in practice little controlled by them, when the chief, if not the principal, business of the House of Commons was understood to be that of granting money to supply the necessities of the sovereign, and when they were not safe from reproof if they presumed to interfere with matters which were regarded at court as beyond their sphere and above their capacity, the association gave an early and notable proof of independence. It is of small importance in regard to their commercial history, but as illustrating the spirit which they displayed when humble petitioners for favour at the hands of a sovereign all but absolute, it is not altogether irrelevant to a part of the inquiry to which the attention of the reader will shortly be called. The petitioners had been encouraged to make preparations for a voyage while their patent of incorporation was under consideration. But the kindness of the Government extended further than this. Whether with a view to benefit the Company, or to promote the interests of an individual, the Queen's advisers recommended Sir Edward Mitchelbourne for employment in the proposed expedition, the committee who managed the affairs of the subscribers—the germ of the present Court of Directors—refused their consent, at the very moment when they were applicants for an exercise of

royal indulgence, when they hung on the breath of the sovereign for corporate existence, they repelled the attempted dictation of the Queen's servants as to the agents whom they should employ in the conduct of their affairs. They put in peril the grant which they sought rather than compromise their independence. The example thus furnished by the authorities of the East-India Company when feebly struggling into existence, should never be absent from the minds of their successors.

While this manifestation of independence was honourable to the Company, it was scarcely less honourable to the Queen's ministers that they abstained from resenting it as an offence. The charter applied for was granted, and the Company commenced its operations. But it was no safe or easy path which the petitioners had obtained the royal sanction to pursue. They went forth as traders, but as warriors also. They had formidable enemies in those nations who had preceded England in the enjoyment of the commerce of the East, and with the Portuguese their conflicts were frequent and sanguinary. In the Dutch they encountered not only commercial rivalry and open hostility, but cruelty and perfidy, and the murder of several British subjects (servants of the Company) by the Dutch Government of Amboyna, perpetrated as the result of a pretended judicial inquiry, attests but too well the malignity with which the new adventurers were regarded and the fearful extent to which it was carried.

Nor was it abroad only that the Company had to contend with dangers and difficulties. At home, though addressed less powerfully to the feeling of physical fear, they were neither few nor trifling. The rights secured, or thought to be secured, by royal charter, were repeatedly invaded under royal authority. New associations were

empowered to compete for a share in the trade which had been given to the Company by a solemn act of the Crown, and, in addition to these breaches of faith, the funds of the Company were sometimes put in requisition to meet the exigencies of the state *

Amidst all these discouragements and embarrassments the Company kept on, sometimes on the verge of destruction and never enjoying any long immunity from difficulty. They established settlements some of which were lost, while others, Fort St. George and Fort William, remained to become the seats of powerful governments. From the British Crown they received the Island of Bombay, which had been part of the marriage portion of Catherine of Portugal, wife of Charles II, and this was the only territorial acquisition which the Company ever acquired through the English Government. All besides was gained by their own exertions and the courage and military talent of their servants. Rarely did any long interval elapse without some occasion calling those qualities into exercise. The Company were engaged in hostilities, sometimes with the Mahrattas, sometimes with the Moguls, and with various fortune. Triumph now attended their arms, and now their factories were plundered and burned, and their servants

* On one occasion the sovereign engaged in a transaction with the Company of very questionable character. Charles I, in want of money to carry on the disputes with the Parliament, adopted the extraordinary expedient of supplying his necessities by resorting to a practice, not unfrequent with bankrupt or swindling traders, but which, it is to be hoped, is almost or entirely without parallel in the annals of public finance. He bought the Company's stock of pepper on credit, and sold it immediately for ready money, at a loss of about thirteen thousand pounds. A small part of this debt was subsequently allowed to the Company as a set off against a claim for customs duties, but the greater part appears to have been lost.

slain or made prisoners At home their difficulties did not abate A new company was raised and incorporated, and the old one was compelled to save itself from dissolution by consenting to a union of the two Thus arose (1709), "The United Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies," which in the course of years became the most powerful corporation which the world had ever seen

For more than a quarter of a century after the junction, the Company was silently acquiring power and importance and stability Their credit was found useful in ministering to the necessities of the state by loans granted in consideration of their exclusive privileges, but excepting with regard to the aid which the Company were thus enabled to furnish, those who were intrusted with the administration of public affairs in England seem to have bestowed little thought upon India A striking illustration of this occurred in the year 1746, when Fort St George was suffered to fall into the hands of the French Some petty additions had been made to the British naval force in the Indian seas, but they were inadequate From advices received by the Court of Directors, that body became convinced of the necessity of further reinforcements The subject was urgently pressed upon the attention of the Admiralty, but the answer was, that the fears entertained by the Court were groundless, and that no French ships had sailed for the East Indies Slowly and reluctantly, some preparation was after a time commenced, but it was too late News arrived that the celebrated La Bourdonnais had sailed with a fleet from the Mauritius, and the next intelligence was, that he had taken Fort St George, which was only recovered by the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle

The Company had, however, by this time, with little

assistance from the state to which they belonged, established a high confidence in the British name and even at this early period, though it would be ridiculous to dignify their small possessions by the name of territory, they were regarded as having a political existence, and their alliance and support were on more than one occasion invoked by native princes. This result was undoubtedly favoured by the peculiar state of society in India, where almost any one who could collect a body of armed followers might aspire to something of a princely character, and where both landed and moneyed capitalists frequently found it necessary to resort to such means for their safety. But the tact with which the Company and their servants conformed to this and other native habits was remarkable, while by engrafting on an eastern stock the spirit, energy, and discipline of Europe, they were silently but deeply, laying the foundations of the Anglo-Indian empire, as it now exists. The rivalry of the French kept them constantly on the alert, the memorable contests for the Subahdarship of the Deccan and the Nabobship of Arcot gave strength and coherence to their military establishments, and the disastrous capture of Calcutta by Sooraj-oo-Dowlah, with the murderous horrors of the Black Hole, did but afford occasion for the British power, exercised and maintained by the British East-India Company, to spring into a degree of vigour and security greater than had previously been known. The military genius of the young writer, ROBERT CLIVE, unexpectedly developed by the circumstances among which he had been thrown with far different views, shed lustre on the Company's service, while it upheld their power and influence. The Great Mogul Empire was now breaking up, and the address of Clive procured for those whom he served the gift of

the Dewanny* of three of its richest provinces. The territory known as the Northern Circars was also added to the dominions of the Company.

In looking back from this period at the history of the Company, it is impossible not to be impressed by its singularity. For more than a hundred years their career had been an almost unbroken series of difficulties and misfortunes. For upwards of thirty years afterwards they enjoyed comparative ease, but little distinction. The calm was broken by calamity—the loss of one of their most important settlements. The misfortune was overcome, the Company advanced from the position of an Association of Foreign Traders to that of one of the political powers of India, and in about fifteen years to that of a leading power. This rank was gained, after a series of contentions with an European rival, powerful, ambitious, and of military habits, by men whose chief business in India was not the acquisition of territory, and who belonged to a nation less influenced by the love of conquest than any of its neighbours. Power and dominion of equal extent were never in any other instance acquired with so little of aggression. Circumstances favoured the aggrandizement of the Company, and those circumstances were prudently watched and carefully improved.

The Dewanny was acquired in 1765. The news of the acquisition, as might be expected, had a powerful effect on the members of the Company at home. But the elation was not confined to them, it extended to the nation at large, and wherever a newspaper found its way, the most extravagant visions of wealth to be derived from England's new possessions were raised and entertained. The enormous for-

* The Dewanny was the right of collecting the revenues, and as he who enjoys the profits of the land is virtually its master, the gift was, in fact, the transfer of the provinces themselves, Bengal, Behar, and Orissa.

tunes acquired by a few individuals in India, within periods which seemed inadequate to their accumulation, unless rupees were to be picked up on the highway, tended to feed these imaginings, which did not, as might have been supposed, prevail exclusively among the more ignorant part of the community, the Cabinet and the Parliament shared in them, and bent an anxious eye towards the mine of inexhaustible treasure, which it was believed the East-India Company had found. The proprietors of India Stock called loudly for increased dividends. The Court of Directors prudently discouraged the desire, and in this they were supported by the ministry, the latter body, however, intending, when time and opportunity should suit, to pounce upon the acquisitions, which it was soon murmured were unfit to be retained by a Commercial Company, and which, indeed, it was asserted, the Company, as subjects of the King of Great Britain, could not legally possess. Had a strong ministry at that time existed, it is probable that a desperate attempt would have been made to transfer India from the care of the East-India Company to that of the immediate servants of the Crown, the revenue expected therefrom being much wanted to supply the Home Exchequer, and the patronage being, in ministerial eyes, still more desirable even than the revenue. But the ministries which for some successive years went into office and came out again—for so brief was their tenure of employment and so insecure at all times their position, that it is more accurate thus to advert to them than to speak of their having held office—these evanescent administrations, which appeared and vanished like figures in a phantasmagoria, were all so weak, that it was with some difficulty that they could be held together till the next succeeding change was ripe, and they were, consequently, not in a condition to

peril the utter wreck of their miserable craft, by bearing down directly on the East-India Company. Further, there was at that time a spirit abroad among the public out of Parliament, so utterly hostile to any thing that should tend to increase the power or influence of the Crown, that an attack upon the revenues of India, if accompanied by any considerable extension of ministerial patronage, would probably have raised a storm, more violent than any—and they were neither few nor light—which the advisers of the Crown had to encounter. There was, however, a great show of doing something. Papers were called for, inquiries instituted, resolutions moved, and Acts for limiting the amount of the dividends of the East-India Company passed. Hints of something further were thrown out, and Alderman Beckford, a man whose wealth exceeded his knowledge as far as his popularity transcended his modesty, was chosen as the mouth-piece of one of the sections of political party to claim for himself and his “brother landholders” the revenues of India as lawful spoil. Behind the curtain which veils the proceedings of cabinets from vulgar gaze, intrigues were going on for effecting covertly, that which it was not convenient or safe to attempt openly. Not only were the public excluded from all knowledge of these mysteries, but even those most closely interested in the subject of them—the Court of Directors of the East-India Company. Commissions were secretly despatched to India, designed to supersede the authority of the Company. The consequence was, that at Madras, the scene chosen for this singular specimen of diplomacy, the servants of the Company and the servants of the Crown became involved in fierce disputes, to the astonishment of native powers and the discredit of the British name. The Governor and Council remained and exercised their

powers as before. The King's commissioner came, and though he did not presume to set aside the former authorities, he acted in perfect independence of them. Madras rivalled Brentford with its two kings, saving that, at the former place, instead of amicably smelling to one nosegay like the polite potentates of the latter, the governor and the commissioner pursued opposite lines of policy, and gave and received mutual affronts in a manner calculated to afford to the natives a most edifying impression of the manner in which public affairs were managed in England.

A ministry which seemed to enjoy a firmer seat than any which had for some time preceded it, at length ventured upon a step somewhat more decisive than had been attempted before. Lord North, whose political courage was far greater than his political success, was the premier under whose auspices the Act of 13 George III, called the Regulating Act, was passed. The minister who lost the dependencies of the British Crown in America undertook to provide for the good government of the people of India, newly transferred to British rule. The augury was not the most happy, but the bill was, upon the whole, better than its paternity might be supposed to indicate. It made great changes in the constitution of the East-India Company, some of them improvements, but the alterations effected in India were marked by a right ministerial love of patronage. The Government of Bengal, the chief settlement, and the seat of the controlling authority, was vested in a governor and council named in the bill,—consequently named by the minister, the council consisted of five, two of whom were servants of the Company, but three—a standing majority—were either friends whom the party which then held the reins of power at home wished to benefit, or enemies whom they wished to conciliate. It has

been conjectured, with some probability, that one of the three* was the author of a series of political letters, distinguished alike by their wit, eloquence, and acrimony, directed during several years against various unpopular public men, and even the august personage whom they served, or wished to serve, and that the appointment to India was the price of his silence. This, however, is but conjecture, but the fact is indisputable, that in re-modelling the Government of India, under the Regulating Act, one prominent object, if not the most prominent, was to open for the minister an entry to the patronage of that country—that patronage which he and his predecessors had so long and so ardently coveted. The nomination of the Council of Bengal, which the ministers enjoyed, under cover of a parliamentary majority, was not all they gained. A new source of patronage was devised in the erection of a Supreme Court of Judicature at Calcutta, where English law was to be administered by English judges, nominated by the Crown and rewarded by large salaries. Into the consequences that followed, this is not the place to inquire, the subject is noticed only in reference to patronage. But though this famous Regulating Act bore on its face the unequivocal stamp of jobbing, it is not to be inferred from this fact (no extraordinary one) that interference on the part of the Crown or the Parliament with the newly-acquired authority of the East-India Company was altogether to be condemned. The acquisition of the Dewanny and of other territorial rights had changed the character and circumstances of the Company. The Crown and the country had become materially interested, and it was quite right that provision should be made for securing the honour and interest of

* Sir Philip Francis, believed by many to have been the author of Junius's letters

both For this purpose it was required, that all the Company's correspondence relating to civil or military affairs, the government of the country, or the administration of the revenues, should be laid before the Treasury by one of the secretaries of state. This was certainly not more than might reasonably have been expected. The East-India Company was not to become an independent sovereign, nor was the Dewanny to be looked upon as its private estate, which it might manage, alienate, or retain at its pleasure. The territory gained in India was to be regarded as an integral part of the British empire. The Company were not to establish an *imperium in imperio*, they had a right to expect to continue stewards of the domain, and it was for the benefit of both countries that they should, but, like all other stewards, they must account. The great evil of the Act of 1773 was, that it interfered injuriously, as well as offensively, with the exercise of the functions of the Company, by giving to India a parliamentary council, but there was this source of consolation, that the arrangement was temporary. It was renewed by an Act passed in 1779, and again by another in 1780, on each occasion for one year. The ministry were too insecure and too much embarrassed by their ill success in America, and the torrent of public indignation which followed, to think of tightening their grasp upon the patronage of India. They had reason for congratulation in being able to keep things as they were. This much they were able to effect. In 1781 another Act was passed for temporarily regulating the government of India and the affairs of the East-India Company, and two* parliamentary

* It seems to have been the prevailing opinion of the day, that India committees must necessarily hunt in couples. A few years before a similar nomination of two committees, carrying on their inquiries simultaneously, was ridiculed by Burke, who compared them

committees, one secret and one open, were appointed to investigate the Company's affairs. These continued to inquire and report, while rapid changes passed over the political system. The manifold blunders and failures of the American war at length precipitated Lord North from the seat of power. The Marquis of Rockingham succeeded, but his death was attended by the death of his administration. The Earl of Shelburne then took the reins of power, but was soon obliged to drop them, when they were caught up by an administration strong (as far as a combination of powerful families could confer strength) beyond any which had preceded it, and perhaps any which has followed. The great Whig party under Mr. Fox, and the party which had for a long period acted under Lord North, had coalesced, and those who had for years denounced each other as enemies of the country, now entered the cabinet arm-in-arm. The statesman, whose policy had dismembered the empire, and his eloquent rival, who had declared that for that policy he deserved to lose his head, divided between them the secretarial duties of the state. A Whig nobleman,* potent in wealth, took his seat at the Treasury as the ostensible head of this motley cabinet, the remaining offices were allotted among the adherents of the two great chiefs, who, like the two ladies in Canning's burlesque of the German drama, had suddenly made up their minds to swear an eternal friendship. This ministry, proudly conscious of its strength, felt no hesitation in screwing its courage to the point of grappling with the two parts of a smoke jack—the one committee, whose proceedings, it seems, were slow, to the weight—the other, who were more vivacious, and, in the language of the great statesman, went “like hey! go mad,” to the flyer, and he concluded that by the combined operation the Company were to be roasted.

* The Duke of Portland

East-India Company, and one of the boldest and most extraordinary plans ever devised for aggrandizing a political association at the expense of chartered rights, public liberty, and royal prerogative, was the result of their councils. It proposed to take away from the Company all their political power, and to vest it in the hands of commissioners, to be named in the first instance by Parliament. But, further, the Company were not even to retain the management of their commercial concerns. These were to be committed to another set of commissioners, also to be named in the first instance by Parliament, and who were to act in subordination to the political commissioners. The entire patronage of India was thus to be transferred to the nominees of the Coalition Ministry, who already commanded the votes of about two-thirds of the House of Commons, and, thus fortified, might soon have increased their majority to nine tenths of that assembly. But the very step meant to render them unassailable proved the cause of their overthrow. Beyond the walls of Parliament they had no party, public opinion was universal and clamorous against the Coalition Ministry and its favourite child, the India Bill. At court they were in no better odour than in the country, the King hated them, and this monster bill afforded him the means of getting rid of them. It passed the Commons triumphantly, and though warmly opposed in the Lords, would have passed there also but for the sudden announcement of the King's hostility. This induced the Peers to pause, the King availed himself of the pause to dismiss his ministry, and call a new one to his councils, and thus was turned aside this fearful blow, aimed not at the East-India Company only, but at the independence of Parliament, the liberties of the people, and the dignity of the Crown. The new ministers were of

course in a minority in the House of Commons, and a bill introduced by them for the government of India necessarily failed. But a new Parliament was called, and the result of the elections gave them a triumphant majority, by the aid of which an Act was passed (1784) which was the foundation of the system under which, with some slight occasional modifications, India has been governed down to the present time. Under this Act the Court of Directors were to continue to conduct the government of India, as well as their own commercial concerns, but in exercising the former duty, their Acts were to be subject to the approbation of a Board, composed of persons nominated by the Crown. There were certain exceptions to the exercise of the authority both of the Court and the Board. Affairs requiring secrecy were to be withdrawn from the cognizance of the Court at large, and transacted by the Board, through a secret committee chosen by the Court of Directors from their own body. The discretion of the Board was, however, limited by defining the subjects on which secret orders were to be given—they were declared to be “the levying of war or making of peace, or treating or negotiating with any native princes or states of India”*. Further—the Board were to have nothing to do with the general patronage of India. The right of making nominations, whether to the civil or military services, was reserved exclusively to the Court of Directors†.

* Extended by 3 & 4 Will IV, cap 85, by adding the words “or with any other princes or states touching the policy to be observed with respect to such princes or states”.

† This was in accordance with the judgment of the greatest and wisest statesmen who have thought on the subject. In a speech of Burke, made in July, 1773, and reprinted from an old magazine, in the ‘Portfolio’ for November, 1844, that distinguished man thus expresses himself —“God knows, that the places, and pensions, and expectancies furnished by the British establishment, are too powerful

It has not been the practice for the Court to interfere with the subsequent progress of those admitted to the services, but to leave their advancement to the established rules of promotion and the discretion of the local governments. There is an exception to this in the case of members of the councils of the chief and subordinate presidencies. To these offices the Court have invariably appointed in conformity with the provisions of the law on the subject.

As no useful purpose would be answered by minutely tracing the slight variations made in the law previously to the year 1833, it will be most convenient to proceed at once to that important era in the history of the Company when their trade, thrown open as to India in 1813, was entirely suspended. But when this great commercial revolution took place, the government of India was continued in the East-India Company, on conditions little varying from those previously imposed. The Board, the Court, and the Secret Committee, with their respective rights and duties, as already explained, are still preserved. The powers

for the small remains of patriotism and public spirit that remain in our island. What then will become of us, if Bengal, if the Ganges pour in a new tide of corruption? Should the evil genius of British liberty so ordain it, I fear this House will be so far from removing the corruption of the East, that it will be corrupted by them. I dread more from the infection of that place, than I hope from your virtue. Was it not the sudden plunder of the East that gave the final blow to the freedom of Rome? What reason have we to expect a better fate? I conjure you by every thing a man ought to hold sacred, I conjure you by the spirits of your forefathers, who so nobly fought and bled for the cause for which I now plead, I conjure you by what includes every thing—by your country—not to yield to the temptations which the East, in the hands of the Crown, holds out—not to plunge into the gulf of corruption, and drag after you your posterity—your country.

of the chief local government have been considerably extended, and the parties comprising it are termed the Governor-General of India in Council. The Governor-General and the governors of the subordinate presidencies, under this and former Acts, are appointed by the Court of Directors, subject to the approbation of the Crown. The appointment of Commander-in-Chief of the forces of India, and of provincial commanders-in-chief, also rests with the Court, subject to the like approbation. The members of the respective councils are appointed as before, with the exception of an additional member to the Council of India, whose office is created by the Act last named, and whose appointment by the Court is made subject to the approbation of the Crown.

It will be evident, from the above sketch, that the policy adopted by successive Parliaments, from the year 1784 downwards, has been to secure to the Court of Directors of the East-India Company a large and responsible share in the government of that country, and that to that end very extensive powers have been reserved to the Court. Among the most important of these is the power of recall. This power, indeed, is inherent in the Company. It is a portion of its original authority, the exercise of which it has always enjoyed, with the exception of a few years after the passing of the Regulating Act, when it was temporarily suspended with regard to the Governor-General and his Council, in order that the nominees of the ministry might retain their appointments. But during the same period, the power of appointing members of Council was also suspended, except with the approbation of the Crown, and even in those evil times when corruption was rampant, and legislation was directed rather to private than public objects, the renewal of the right both of nomination and removal was expressly

provided for.* Decency—even according to the standard of decency then prevailing in political circles—required this much. Except in the charters to which the Company traces its original constitution, this right of recall is nowhere pretended to be given or created, it is, throughout the statutory enactments affecting the Company, recognized as something previously existing, an undoubted and unquestionable right. It is thus referred to in the 33 Geo III (1793), chap 52, where a section (35) giving to the Crown the power of recall is succeeded by another (36) which runs thus —“ Provided always and be it further enacted, that nothing in this Act contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to preclude or take away the power of the Court of Directors of the said Company from removing or recalling any of the officers or servants of the said Company, but that the said Court shall and may at all times have full liberty to remove, recall, or dismiss any of such officers or servants at their will and pleasure, in the like manner as if this Act had not been made, any Governor-General, Governor, or Commander-in-Chief, appointed by his Majesty, his heirs or successors, through the default of appointment by the said Court of Directors always excepted,† any thing herein contained to the contrary notwithstanding.” A similar proviso is found in the Act 53 Geo III, chap 155, sec 80, wherein, after the right of the Court to appoint to the offices of Governor-General, Governor, and Commander-in-Chief, has been re-assured to the Court, subject to

* “And from and after the expiration of the said term of five years, the power of nominating and removing the successors of Governor-General and Council shall be vested with the Directors of the said United Company.” —13th Geo III, cap 62, sec 10

† If the Court neglect to appoint to these offices within a limited period, the right of appointment (for that turn) lapses to the Crown

the approbation of the Crown, the Act continues, "Provided always that nothing herein contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to take away or affect the power of the said Court of Directors to remove or recall any such Governor-General, Governor, or Commander-in-Chief, but the said Court shall and may at all times have full liberty to remove, recall, and dismiss any such Governor-General, Governor, or Commander-in-Chief, at their will and pleasure, in the like manner as if this Act had not been made" Again, in the 3 & 4 William IV, chap 85, an Act effecting greater changes in regard to the Company than any other passed from the commencement of its existence, the right of recall is not less distinctly recognized. The 74th section secures the right of the Crown in this respect, the 75th reserves that of the Court of Directors. "Provided always, and be it enacted, that nothing in this Act contained shall take away the power of the said Court of Directors to remove or dismiss any of the officers or servants of the said Company, but that the said Court shall and may at all times have full liberty to remove or dismiss any of such officers or servants, at their will and pleasure" The remainder of the section exempts from recall by the Court, as before, any servant of the Company appointed by the Crown, in consequence of the default of the Court to appoint.

The power of the Court to recall is indeed so clear, that to argue in defence of it may seem like an ostentatious lighting of lamps amid the blaze of a noon-day sun. An array of authority, on a point so indisputable, may appear entirely superfluous, and it would be so, but for the extraordinary statements which are reported to have been made on the subject. It is said to have been stated that the retention of a free exercise of the power of recall by the

Court "must have resulted from an oversight,"* that the law upon this point "was renewed without consideration," or "at all events without discussion"† Now, it must have been a very extraordinary oversight which could lead to the continuance of such a power for sixty years after the government of India became the subject of permanent regulation, and could not only so continue the power, but recognize it over and over again in solemn acts of the Legislature. These recognitions, indeed, are *mere* recognitions—they convey no new power—they only bear testimony to the existence of one previously possessed. But to talk of "oversight" in the face of these recognitions is surely trying the possible effect of bold assertion, far beyond the limits of common prudence. A clause, like this, solemnly recognizing a power so great and important, slipping into an Act of Parliament—aye, into several Acts of Parliament—no one knows how, is a fact, if fact it be, somewhat startling. Such a fact is surely without parallel, except in the case of Dibdin's Jew, who, on his return from a walk, finding a gold watch in his pocket which was not there when he set out, records the discovery in his journal with the quiet comment, "dropt in by accident." And so it seems that this clause found its way into Act after Act, and no one could account for it. There it stood plain and clear as the type of the royal printer could make it, to sear the eyeballs of those who loved it not, but how it came there they knew no more than that mysterious personage who is said to inhabit the lunar planet—"dropt in by accident!" But then the clause was renewed, in the last instance at least, (in 1833), "without consideration," or "at all events without discussion." The proof offered of this is, that upon refer-

* See Hansard's Debates, vol 74, p. 276

† Ibid vol 74, p 345

ence to the *Minor of Parliament* for that year, it does not appear that there was a single word said about it in either House * This may be quite true, but it only proves that the clause passed without parliamentary discussion It does not prove that those who framed the Act or those who passed it were ignorant of what they were doing—that the extent of the power in question, and the possibility of its being called into exercise, were altogether overlooked To prove this, the eminent person whose hostility to the clause induced him thus to account for its introduction is reported to have said, “I have looked into the papers of the correspondence between the Directors and the Board of Control, and there is not one single word said of it in these on either side, and I have looked into the debates of 1784, when Mr Pitt first brought in the bill containing this ill-omened clause, *for it was in that originally*, and I find not one single word said on either side in either House ”† Now the papers of correspondence between the Directors and the Board here referred to are undoubtedly those connected with the renewal of the Company’s government and the suspension of their trade, effected by the Act of 1833, which papers were printed by order of the Court of Directors for the information of the Proprietors, and collected in a volume, the title-page of which bears the date of that year These papers, it is alleged, have been “looked into,” and found to afford no trace of the subject of recall by the Court having undergone any consideration, “there is not one single word said of it in them on either side” The look bestowed on these papers must certainly have been very transient and cursory, for it does happen, that instead of containing “not one single word” on the subject,

* See Hansard, vol 74, p 345

† Hansard, vol 74, p 345

they contain several words, which words occur in at least three different places. At page 4, in a "Memorandum, or paper of hints," transmitted to the Chairman of the Company by the President of the Board, the following passage presents itself "Appointment of governors subject, as now, to the approbation of the King, but the Board to have a veto on the recall. The same with regard to commanders of the forces." It seems then that the subject was not overlooked by the ministers,—nor was it by the members of the Court. At page 127 of the volume, the following passage occurs in a dissent recorded by Henry St George Tucker, Esq. "The retention of the power to recall governors and commanders-in-chief appears to me to be highly essential to the respectability and efficiency of the Court of Directors. This power has been rarely exercised, and there can be no temptation to abuse it, but if it be withdrawn, the public functionaries abroad may set at nought the authority of the Court, and may hold us in contempt. A governor may be lavish in the public expenditure, may think only of providing for his own dependents or those of the ministry, may be indolent and inactive, or arbitrary and capricious in the exercise of his powers, and notwithstanding these and other defects of character and conduct, he will retain firm possession of his station, as long as he can succeed in propitiating the ministry of the day, who may be interested in his continuance of office, and even derive influence and advantage from his mal-administration." Again, at page 187, it will be found that the President of the Board, in replying to a letter from the Chairman and Deputy-Chairman of the Company, thus expresses himself "I do not know if the words 'exercising the same powers as the Company now possess under their charter' are here introduced

with any specific reference To the general propositions which they express, his Majesty's ministers have, through me, repeatedly declared their adherence, and they are not aware that it is, in the slightest degree, impaired by any modification they contemplate in the existing system Whatever changes Parliament may in its wisdom see fit to adopt, will, I doubt not, be made without detriment to the substantial authority of the Company It is possible that the words in question have been inserted in consequence of the hint thrown out in the memorandum, that the Board should have a veto on the recall of governors and military commanders in India In order to obviate misconstruction, I avail myself of this opportunity to inform you, that it is not the intention of his Majesty's ministers to insist on the suggestion just mentioned "

And was the insertion then of the provision of recognition in the new Act an "oversight?"—was the retention of an unqualified power of recall by the Court allowed "without consideration?" Above we have an official suggestion from the ministry for the modification of the power—an argument against its modification by a member of the Court of Directors, and finally a formal withdrawal of the proposal for modification by the authority from whom the proposal came—and all these are contained in the volume which was searched without one single word on the subject being found !

Let us pass on to the consideration of the statement, that the clause recognizing the right of the Court to recall was originally in the Act of 1784, and that, notwithstanding, nothing was said on the subject in the course of the debates in either House Here, unfortunately, is manifested a defect of vision exactly opposite in nature to that which prevailed when the correspondence on the renewal of the

Company's powers in 1833 was examined In the correspondence, that which is obvious to all the world besides, is unseen by the examiner In the Act of 1784, that which no one else can discern is distinctly visible Like him

“ Who to the Dean and silver bell can swear,
And sees at Canons what was never there,”

the examiner of the Act of 1784 finds a clause—an “ ill-omened clause” it is called, which the Act does not contain—which it certainly never did contain, unless it has dropped *out* by some chance not less wonderful than that by which the same “ ill-omened clause” dropt *into* a later Act The power of recall by the Court is not adverted to in that Act, the reason probably being that as the Court already possessed the power, and no intention existed of interfering with it, there was no absolute necessity for bringing it forward It was distinctly recognized in the succeeding Act of 1793, and at this distance of time it is not easy to determine the motives to such recognition It probably originated in some apprehension, on the part of the Court, that their right might, by lapse of time, be overlooked or forgotten But why is the clause in question—the clause which is *not* in the Act of 1784, and which *is* (whether by oversight or otherwise) in the Act of 1833—called “ an ill-omened clause ?” Whatever view may be taken of the question—whether or not the Court of Directors should possess the power of recall, the clause is a very harmless one The right of the Court does not depend upon it The sum of its possible effect is, to put a stop to quibbling Suppose the clause had been left out of the last Act, by which the administration of the government of India was continued to the East-India Company, would the power of recall have thus been silently dropped, like the clause itself, from the Act of

1784? Certainly not. The Act of 1833 is only part of the law under which the authority of the Company is exercised, and it happens to contain the following section (not let in, it may be presumed, by "oversight") "And be it enacted, that all and singular the privileges, franchises, abilities, capacities, powers, authorities, whether military or civil, rights, remedies, methods of suit, penalties, provisions, matters and things whatsoever, granted to, or continued in, the said United Company by the said Act of the fifty-third year of King George the Third, for and during the term limited by the said Act, and all other the enactments, provisions, matters and things contained in the said Act, or in any other Act or Acts whatsoever, which are limited, or may be construed to be limited, to continue for and during the term granted to the said Company by the said Act of the fifty-third of King George the Third, so far as the same or any of them are in force, and not repealed by, or repugnant to, the enactments hereinafter contained, and all powers of alienation and disposition, rights, franchises, and immunities which the said United Company now have, shall continue and be in force, and may be exercised and enjoyed, as against all persons whomsoever, subject to the superintendence, direction, and control, hereinbefore mentioned, until the thirtieth day of April, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-four."

The right of the Court of Directors to recall without reference to any other authority, then, is clear, it is recognized by the Act under which the Company's term of government was last renewed, and if that Act were silent on this particular point it would be immaterial, for the right rests on preceding charters and acts, the validity of which is therein solemnly affirmed. Indeed the right is not a subject for question, though, in some quarters, it is mat-

ter for great wonderment how it ever came to exist, and how it came to be continued to this good year 1844, then to be exercised, to the astonishment of at least one of those through whose "oversight" it had been permitted to be retained. The learned individual thus amazed "verily believes," according to Hansard, "it was left in one India bill after another, from a perfect persuasion that it would never be acted upon,"—a different thing by the way from 'oversight'—"but would remain a dead letter, unless some extraordinary emergency—some crisis of the fate of our Indian empire—might render it necessary for the Directors to exercise this most anomalous and extraordinary jurisdiction."* Now what sort of emergency, what sort of crisis is here contemplated? And who is to judge whether the emergency be sufficiently great, or the crisis sufficiently dangerous to render "necessary" the exercise of the power? Who can judge but the Court, who are intrusted in this case with uncontrolled authority? In their judgment the recall of Lord Ellenborough was necessary—in the judgment of their learned critic it was not. The whole question resolves itself into a matter of opinion, and to talk of limiting the exercise of a strictly legal right, by reference to considerations of which no philologist can fix the exact meaning, and which no casuist can reduce to logical distinctness, is idle in the extreme. The qualification, therefore, of the position first laid down, by reference to an emergency or a crisis, is worth nothing—in the language of the law, it is void for uncertainty, and we are thrown back upon the naked principle, the principle evidently entertained by the speaker, that this important power of recall, so long enjoyed and so frequently confirmed by solemn acts of the legislature, ought never to be exercised at all. In the language above quoted

* Debates, vol 74, page 345

from the parliamentary debates it is to be "a dead letter." And can it be that the legislature, passing clause upon clause recognizing the power, has been only adding fresh acts to a solemn farce—that the intention was to give the semblance of power and withhold the reality? If such were the case, most clumsily has the intention been fulfilled, for the power has actually been conceded, and not until it is used in a manner which does not meet the approval of one noble peer do we hear that the law on the subject was never designed to have any effect—that its framers meant nothing—or worse than nothing, for if this interpretation of their intentions be correct, they must have meant to deceive. In what a dignified position does this place both the Legislature and the East-India Company! The latter, it seems, were trusted with the power of recall, upon much the same condition as the Vicar of Wakefield's daughters enjoyed the privilege of pocket-money, each of the young ladies received a guinea, with a strict injunction never to change it. This we are told was for the honour of the family. For whose honour the Court of Directors were to have charge of a power which they were never to use, does not appear. The contract between the Legislature and the Company, in this view, would be much like one described by Selden in his Table Talk. "Lady Kent artcled with Sir Edward Herbert that he should come to her when she sent for him, and stay with her as long as she would have him, to which he set his hand, then he artcled with her that he should go away when he pleased, and stay away as long as he pleased, to which she set her hand." So, by law, the Court of Directors are to have the power of recalling a Governor-General "at their will and pleasure"—thus runs the Act—but then, on the other hand, the Governor-General may hold office as long as he shall please (at least as far as the Court are

concerned), do what he may—except, indeed, on the occasion of some great “emergency,” some fearful “crisis” not defined nor definable—one of those extraordinary events which set at defiance all ordinary rules, and of course among others, the rule that the Court of Directors should not recall a Governor-General unless it is his pleasure to come back. Thus, for instance, if a Governor-General should throw off his allegiance to the British Crown, should declare himself sovereign of India, and raise an army to support his pretensions, why, such a case perhaps might be regarded as an “emergency,” a great “crisis,” and the Court of Directors might resort to a recall. True it is, that the case is not very likely to occur, and if it did, the exercise of an independent power of recall would scarcely be indispensable, for no authority in this country would oppose the views of the Court, and if the Court are to act on their own sole responsibility only when no human being can differ from their judgment, it must be granted that their responsibility is not very onerous.

But it is not so. The right to recall is not a mere name, it is not a piece of solemn, but hollow pomp—an appendage of state harmless as the sword that dangles by the skirts of a court-dress, for show and not for service, or as the mace of the Lord Mayor, which has never been raised as a weapon of offence since wielded by Sir William Walworth, in Smithfield. It is a substantial power, and it is a power necessary to enable the Court of Directors to discharge their functions with efficiency. Without it a contumacious servant might altogether defy them. He may be disobedient now, but it is at his peril. For the exercise of the power of recall the Court, like all persons in the country who are intrusted with political authority, are responsible. They are not to exercise it

capriciously, or without just cause. Indeed, it should never be exercised but with the highest degree of gravity and deliberation. So great is the punishment thereby inflicted upon the offending party—so deep is the wound inflicted upon his reputation—so fearful the effect upon his prospects—that those at whose bidding the punishment descends may well pause before they strike. A meritorious minister may be excluded from the cabinet by jealousies and dissensions among his colleagues, or he may be removed by the influence of parliamentary faction. Neither of these causes can operate in the Court of Directors. They may act erroneously in dismissing one of their servants, but the presumption must always be that they act honestly.

The Court have certainly shewn no undue appetite for the exercise of this great power of recall. The first instance of their recalling a Governor-General does not occur till sixty years after the Government of India was placed on its present footing, and during that period the power of recall has been exercised only once with regard to the governor of a subordinate presidency. The novelty of the event which has deprived Lord Ellenborough of office, has more than any other cause drawn attention to his removal, and the habitual moderation of the Court in the exercise of its power, has thus given to the act a degree of public interest which but for this circumstance it could scarcely have commanded. If the recall of a Governor-General were of frequent occurrence, it would pass with little observation, but the rarity of such an event, together with the circumstances under which it is understood that the appointment of Lord Ellenborough was made, and those under which it was annulled, give an impulse not only to popular curiosity, but to the inquiries of those who desire to form a rational judgment on the merits of the case. The circum-

stances here alluded to are these. It is believed, that in appointing his Lordship to the office of Governor-General, the Court of Directors were nearly unanimous, it is pretty generally known that on the question of his removal they were quite unanimous. Now if he had been elected by a bare majority and afterwards removed by a bare majority, there would have been room for ascribing his removal plausibly, whether justly or not, to personal feeling, or to chance operating through the periodical changes in the Court, which take place under legislative provision. But when all but unanimity of opinion in selecting him, is succeeded by perfect unanimity as to the necessity for his removal, it is quite impossible to attribute the later act to any such causes as those adverted to. Again, if his Lordship's tenure of office had been of extraordinary length, circumstances might readily be imagined to have arisen gradually to cool the affection of his friends, and give confidence to his enemies. But his Lordship returned his honourable appointment for only about two years, and the accomplishment, within so brief a period, of a revolution of opinion, so great and general, in the body to whom he owed both his appointment and his recall, is certainly a startling fact, and the more so when the character of that body is taken into consideration. If any one quality were to be selected as peculiarly characteristic of the Court of Directors of the East-India Company, it would be caution. Every member of the Court has a pecuniary stake in India, and the Court collectively are the representatives of the great body of claimants upon its territory. Among the Directors are men personally acquainted with India, and with the sources from which danger in that country is likely to arise, men trained by long experience in civil, political, legal, military and maritime affairs, merchants of great eminence and bankers of

the highest standing, most of them are of mature age, and the political opinions of the majority are those of the party with which Lord Ellenborough has generally acted. If indeed a body eminently conservative in its views and habits, and cautious beyond the ordinary measure of caution, were sought for, it would be found in the Court of Directors of the East-India Company,—if they be found to act rashly, there is no faith to be placed in human discretion. By that body Lord Ellenborough was elevated to the office of Governor-General—by that body he has been dismissed, under circumstances of striking singularity. It remains to inquire into the reasons for this last step, and there is no satisfactory mode of ascertaining them but by examining his Lordship's policy and conduct during the brief term of his government.

In ordinary candour, it must be admitted, that on the arrival of Lord Ellenborough in India, his situation was neither enviable nor easy. He found the long triumphant flag of England humbled by disaster and defeat. A vast army had been sacrificed without any countervailing advantage, isolated bodies of British troops still remained exposed to danger, while a number of unhappy captives were in the hands of a ruffian chief, on whose probable disposal of them no one could guess, the power of the British name had received a fearful diminution, the spirit of the army was shaken by the disasters which had overtaken their comrades, and the past and the future seemed alike involved in gloom. The earliest impressions and earliest declarations of Lord Ellenborough were such as became a British Governor-General. He arrived at Calcutta on the 28th February, 1842, and on the 15th March following his Lordship in Council addressed the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Jasper Nicolls, in language well suited to the circumstances which surrounded him —“ Whatever course,” it is

observed, " we may hereafter take must rest solely upon military considerations, and have, in the first instance, regard to the safety of the detached bodies of our troops at Jelalabad, at Ghuznee, at Khelat-i-Ghilzie, and Kanda ar, to the security of our troops now in the field from all unnecessary risk, and, finally, TO THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF OUR MILITARY REPUTATION, by the infliction of some signal and decisive blow upon the Affghans, which may make it appear to them, to our own subjects, and to our allies, that we have the power of inflicting punishment upon those who commit atrocities, and violate their faith, and that we withdraw ultimately from Affghanistan, not from any deficiency of means to maintain our position, but because we are satisfied that the king we have set up, has not, as we were erroneously led to imagine, the support of the nation over which he has been placed"* In a subsequent part of the same letter his Lordship, after urging the necessity of paying regard to circumstances in coming to action with the enemy, so as to secure to the British force the advantages derived from their superior discipline, thus continues "At the same time we are aware that no great object can be accomplished without incurring some risk, and we should consider that the object of striking a decisive blow at the Affghans, more especially if such blow could be struck in combination with measures for the relief of Ghuznee—a blow which might re-establish our military character beyond the Indus, and leave a deep impression of our power and of the vigour with which it would be applied to punish an atrocious enemy—would be one for which risk might be justifiably

* Papers relating to military operations in Affghanistan, presented to both houses of Parliament by command of her Majesty, 1843, p 167

incurred, all due and possible precaution being taken to diminish such necessary risk, and to secure decisive success”^{*} His Lordship likewise adverts to the release of the prisoners taken at Kabool, as an object “deeply interesting in point of feeling and of honour,” and suggests, with a view to attain it, the taking of hostages from those parts of the country which the British force might be able to occupy, as well as the prospective advance of General Pollock beyond Jelalabad even to Kabool

Thus much was well, but how did his Lordship fulfil the expectations which he had thus excited? He found that considerable preparations had been made for recommencing operations in Affghanistan, and he proceeded to complete and to add to them. He left Calcutta and his Council in order that he might be nearer to the seat of war and give the weight of his personal influence and the advantage of his personal superintendence to the affairs in progress on the frontier. This seemed to indicate not only great energy, but great determination of purpose, and those who observed the conduct of the Governor-General, who knew the character of the officers and men at his disposal, and who thought, moreover, of the great objects before him—the military reputation of Great Britain to be re-established—the terror of its name to be restored—treachery to be punished—and its surviving victims, comprising women and children as well as men, to be rescued—those who felt the importance of these objects, and who witnessed or heard of the restless vivacity of the Governor-General, never doubted that all would be well—never supposed for a moment that any check would be put upon the ardour of the military commanders, that any obstacle would be interposed between their desire for action and the

gratification of it, or that he who had thought the prosecution of the war a matter of so much importance, as for the sake of aiding it to separate himself from his Council, and make a journey of several hundred miles, was prepared to acquiesce in so pitiful a termination of the labours of himself and his predecessor as that of merely getting the troops in Affghanistan back again to India. Yet thus it was. Some ill success befel the British cause—Ghuznee was surrendered to the enemy, General England failed in his attempt to join General Nott at Kandahar, and further, a bad spirit was understood to prevail in a part of the force under General Pollock. The new Governor-General, it became apparent, in spite of his high purposings, was not a man to encounter difficulties or persevere under discouragement—his moral courage oozed away as he approached the scene of action, and the “re-establishment of our military reputation—the decisive blow at the Affghans”—and the safety of the prisoners—were all cast to the winds. On the 19th April, General Nott was ordered to destroy Kelat-i-Ghilzie, to evacuate Kandahar, and to fall back to Quetta *

In advising the Commander-in-Chief of the transmission of these orders, the Governor-General says, “The severe check experienced by Brigadier England’s small corps on the 28th ultimo—an event disastrous as it was unexpected—and of which we have not yet information to enable us to calculate all the results, has a tendency so to cripple the before limited means of movement and of action which were possessed by Major-General Nott, as to render it expedient to take immediate measures for the ultimate safety of that officer’s corps, by withdrawing it, at the earliest practicable period, from its advanced position, into nearer

* Paper*, pages 223, 4

communication with India.”* On the very day on which these orders to General Nott and the letter to the Commander-in-Chief bear date, the Governor-General published a notification of the successful advance of the troops under General Pollock into the Khyber Pass, and of the evacuation by the enemy of the fort of Ali Musjid † On the same day the Governor-General addressed to Sir Jasper Nicolls a second letter, the subject being the position of General Pollock, | to whom he desired the Commander-in-Chief to transmit instructions, and this was followed by a third, in which the nature of these desired instructions is unequivocally anticipated His Lordship says —“ What ulterior destination may be given to those corps, when that of Major-General Nott, having drawn off the garrison of Khelat-i-Ghilzie, shall be concentrated ultimately in the vicinity of Sukkur, and *that of Major-General Pollock having drawn off the garrison of Jelalabad shall be again on this side of the Khyber Pass*, is a matter for the most serious consideration, and one upon which I am most anxious to have the opportunity of conferring personally with your Excellency, or with some officer in your confidence, whom you may depute to me for that purpose”§ His Lordship then alludes to the possibility of selecting a new line of advance should the war be renewed *after the retreat of the two Generals as above assumed*, but immediately adds — “ It will, however, likewise be for consideration, whether our troops, having been redeemed from the state of peril in which they have been placed in Affghanistan, and, it may still be hoped, not without the infliction of some severe blow upon the Affghan army, it would be justifiable again to push them for no other object than that of revenging our

* Papers, page 224

† Papers, page 201

‡ Papers, page 224.

§ Papers, page 225

losses and of re-establishing, in all its original brilliancy, our military character " For no other object! The restoration of our military character is not much it seems, and the safety of the prisoners nothing, for this point is not adverted to Two days after this, namely, on the 21st of April, the Governor-General received authentic information of Sir Robert Sale's victory at Jelalabad and of General England having regained, without further loss, his position at Quetta, where he had been joined by the rest of his brigade These events he communicated to the Secret Committee in a letter dated the 22nd, together with the following account of their influence, or rather want of influence, on his opinion with regard to the necessity for retreat " These several events, although they improve our prospects to some extent, have in no respect altered my deliberate opinion, that it is expedient to withdraw the troops under Major-General Pollock and those under Major-General Nott at the earliest practicable period into positions, wherein they may have certain and easy communication with India,"* that is, to withdraw the troops of General Pollock to Peshawur, and those of General Nott to Quetta " That opinion," his lordship adds, " is formed upon a general view of our military, political, and financial situation, and is not liable to be lightly changed " The same general views are expressed in nearly the same words in a letter dated the 24th April, to Mr George Clerk, the Governor-General's agent with the Sikh Government—" To regain concentrated positions for our armies, having easy and secure communications with India, is the present object of the Government, and one not lightly to be changed ," and again—" All that the Governor-General regards"—*all*, be it observed—" is the security of our communication with the troops beyond

* Papers, page 223

the Upper Indus, and their withdrawal, at the earliest practicable period, from their advanced positions, in a state of continued efficiency, undiminished by the climate or by the enemy"* Such was the unvarying tenor of Lord Ellenborough's language from the time that he quitted his council and acted without advice or check of any kind. The burden of his instructions was retire—fall back—get towards India as fast as you can—leave the Affghans to themselves, and by consequence leave the British prisoners to be mal-treated and murdered by those whom our pusillanimity will thus relieve from the restraint hitherto imposed by their fears.

Reverses had shaken his lordship's confidence in every thing but his own judgment, success had no power to re-assure him. And yet, on one occasion, he did indulge in a flight of expectation which, to all but himself, must appear most extravagant. It has been seen how he spoke of the situation and prospects of the British armies in Affghanistan on the 19th, 22nd, and 24th April. On the 28th he caused no less than three letters to be written to General Pollock, one intimating his belief in the reports of the death of Shah Shoojah, and his conviction of the impossibility of the British Government recognizing a successor under the circumstances that prevailed, a second, giving permission to treat with a *de facto* government for the exchange of prisoners, if such government were capable of carrying an exchange into effect, and a third, the crowning letter of all, announcing that the aspect of affairs in Upper Affghanistan appeared to be such, that his lordship could not but contemplate "the possibility"—a possibility indeed—of General Pollock having been led to "advance upon and occupy the City of Kabool"†. Certainly his lordship's

* Papers, page 232

† Papers, page 235

notions of possibility were not narrow. He speaks of marching to Kabool as coolly "as maids of fifteen do of puppy dogs." This offhand way of treating a great and most difficult military operation—in operation so great and so difficult, that the Governor-General seems, both before and after this communication, to have regarded it as all but hopeless, is highly characteristic. The consistency of his lordship is not less remarkable. At one time to advance, is treated almost as much beyond rational contemplation as a journey to the moon. At another the march of an army from Jelalabad to Kabool is spoken of as lightly as a walk from London to Highgate. But, let justice be done—though the Governor-General actually indulged in a vision of the possibility of an army situated like that of General Pollock, without preparation and without arrangement or understanding with General Nott, pushing on to Kabool and occupying it as easily as a party of schoolboys would run over Blackheath, he still harps on his old string, retirement. General Pollock is assured that the Governor-General's views are unchanged, and that if he should be at Kabool, he must leave it as quickly as possible. "If that event," the imaginary march to Kabool, "should have occurred, you will understand, that it will in no respect vary the view which the Governor-General previously took of the policy now to be pursued. The Governor-General will adhere" (this WILL is very characteristic also) "to the opinion, that the only safe course is, that of withdrawing the army under your command, at the earliest practicable period, into positions within the Khyber Pass, where it may possess easy and certain communications with India."* But the hallucination about marching to Kabool afforded but a temporary interruption to the

uniformity of the Governor-General's strain Only nine days before it commenced,—that is, on the 19th April,—he had called on the Commander-in-Chief to furnish additional instructions to General Pollock, and it has been seen what sort of instructions were expected Sir Jasper Nicolls seems to have doubted as to the propriety of thus embarrassing the general, whereupon Lord Ellenborough, unable to brook delay, himself undertook the duty of reading a lecture on war,—not to Hannibal, but to a very able and experienced officer, who, in the judgment of his immediate military superior, stood in no need of the assistance “The general,” said Sir Jasper Nicolls, “is a clear-headed, good officer, and you have loaded his advance with heavy cautions”* These heavy cautions, however, were repeated in a letter dated the 4th May. Not quite a week had elapsed since the Governor-General had hoped or feared, it is difficult to say which, that General Pollock was at Kabool, or in full march thither On the 4th May, he indulges imaginings as to what the general is about, as he did on the 28th April, but their complexion is not quite the same Let the reader judge Here is Lord Ellenborough's vision of General Pollock, as presented to his Lordship's mind on the date first named above, but last in the order of time,—viz on the 4th May “The most recent accounts which have been received of the difficulty experienced by you in obtaining supplies at Jelalabad, and in bringing forward supplies from Peshawur, and the very deficient means of movement, as well as of provision, which you possess, induce the Governor-General to expect”—now mark the expectation, within a week after, he thought it possible that General Pollock had gone to Kabool—“that you will have already decided upon withdrawing your

* Papers—*ut supra*—page 240.

troops within the Khyber Pass into a position wherein you may have easy and certain communication with India, if considerations, having regard to the health of the army, should not have induced you to defer that movement”* And while the reader notes the marvellous consistency of these expectations, between the indulgence of which six days only intervened, let him not omit to notice the testimony given by the Governor-General to the means possessed by General Pollock for making the march to Kabool, which it was thought possible he might have undertaken—“the very deficient means of movement as well as of provision which you possess”—these are the Governor-General’s words, and yet he dreamed that in such circumstances an officer of so much ability and so much experience as General Pollock should commit the folly of marching for Kabool, this too, in the teeth of his own avowed opinion thus declared “His Lordship is too strongly impressed with confidence in your judgment to apprehend that you will ever place the army under your command in a situation in which, without adequate means of movement and supply, it could derive no benefit from its superior valour and discipline, and might be again subjected to a disaster which, if repeated, might be fatal to our power in India”* Most just was this his Lordship’s impression, but how is it to be reconciled with his former impression or supposition, something less than a week old?

Before the letter of the 4th May was written, the Commander-in-Chief had come to the rescue, and had issued instructions in general accordance with the Governor-General’s wishes, so much so, indeed, that his Lordship tendered in return, not only his approbation, but his thanks, and in order that the instructions might have all the weight

which his own military knowledge and experience could give them, Lord Ellenborough lost no time in assuring General Pollock, by another despatch, that his judgment confirmed that of the Commander-in-Chief *. The orders thus embodying the views of the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief were very distinct. After adverting to the instructions given to General Nott to evacuate Kandahar, and retire first upon Quetta, and ultimately upon Sukkur, it is added, "You are required to make a similar movement in Upper Affghanistan, and to WITHDRAW EVERY BRITISH SOLDIER FROM JELALABAD TO PESH-AWUR "†

From these orders no deviation was to take place, except in three possible cases. First, that certain negotiations in progress for the release of the prisoners lately confined at Buddeabad should have been brought to such a point that its accomplishment might be endangered by withdrawing, secondly, that before the receipt of these orders, General Pollock should have despatched a lightly-equipped force to endeavour to rescue those prisoners, thirdly, that the enemy at Kabool should be moving a force to attack that of the English general. In this "improbable case," as it was most justly termed, it was held to be advisable to inflict a blow on the enemy, but provided only that "any respectable number of troops" should "have descended into the plain below Jugdulluk" with the intent of making such an attack as that referred to. If the number were not "respectable," or, though "respectable," should not have advanced beyond Jugdulluk, but were only on their way thither, the British army was to run before them. With regard to the prisoners, the qualification introduced was as follows "I allude entirely to the officers and ladies now or

* Papers, pages 242, 243

† Papers, page 242

lately at Buddeabad, or its vicinity. Those at Kabool cannot, I think, be saved by any treaty or agreement made, under existing circumstances, at Jelalabad." So their recovery was given up. Such were the instructions of which the Governor-General entirely approved, as he assured the Commander-in-Chief and General Pollock. Lest General Nott should be inconveniently influenced by a professional passion for maintaining his country's honour, he, too, on the 7th May, was once more addressed, he was apprized of the nature of the instructions which had been forwarded to General Pollock, and reminded of the tenor of those previously transmitted to himself. The 13th May produced another letter to General Nott, adverting to the proposed advance of General England to join that officer, and admitting that the position of the former at Kandahar was more favourable than it had been supposed to be when the orders of the 19th April were issued, "But," it was added, "this improvement of your position is not such as to induce his Lordship to vary those instructions, in so far as they direct your retiring upon Sukkur. That movement you will make at such period, and with such precautions, as may best conduce to the preservation of the health of your troops and the efficiency of your army. The Governor-General understands that, consistently with the necessary regard to these objects of primary importance, you cannot retire below the passes till October."* This extension of time is attributed by Lord Ellenborough to the advice of the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Jasper Nicolls.* A similar extension was conceded to General Pollock, in accordance, as it would appear, with the views of the General himself, acting under the discretion intrusted to him by the Commander-in-Chief, when, in compliance with

* See Papers, page 251

the pressing desire of the Governor-General, he issued his further instructions. This is to be inferred from a letter of Mr Clerk to Sir Jasper Nicolls, dated 5th May, in which he says "Adverting to the opinions expressed by General Pollock, in his letter written after the arrival of Captain Mackenzie in his camp, I conclude that, with the discretion vested in him under your Excellency's orders, he will not abandon either the British captives, or the position he holds at Jelalabad"*

Referring to this letter from Mr Clerk, Lord Ellenborough, writing to the Commander-in-Chief on the 14th May, says "The advance of the season, however, which really renders the retirement of Major-General Pollock at the present moment a measure of some hazard to the health of his troops—the improved facilities which the major-general finds of obtaining supplies of provisions—but, more than all, *the influence which those now about him*, anxious to vindicate the army by some signal blow against the Affghans, and to effect the restoration of the prisoners to liberty by negotiation supported by force, must necessarily have upon his mind,—all these things induce me to apprehend that it will hardly be until October that the major-general will commence his homeward march"†

Notwithstanding all the reasons here enumerated in favour of delaying the retirement of General Pollock, the measure was obviously not in favour with the Governor-General. This might be presumed from the somewhat ungracious reference to the "influence of those about" the general, and the presumption is strengthened by a letter to General Pollock, dated the 29th of May, written, as it

* Further Papers, ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 17th February, 1843

† Papers, page 252

appears, under a deep apprehension that the General might have mistaken his instructions, and have given to the discretion left him wider limits than those by which it was intended to be circumscribed. The date of this letter, however, affords some food for reflection. The ostensible occasion of its being written is a passage in a letter from Mr Clerk to General Pollock, dated the 18th of May, a copy of which was forwarded to the Governor-General on the 21st. In this letter, Mr Clerk had expressed his belief that, with the negotiations pending in front, General Pollock would not withdraw. There is no evidence as to the time when this letter was received by Lord Ellenborough, but it is certain that on the 14th of May he was in possession of a letter addressed by Mr Clerk, on the 5th of that month, to Sir Jasper Nicolls (already quoted), in which he says (speaking of General Pollock), "I conclude that with the discretion vested in him under your Excellency's orders, HE WILL NOT ABANDON EITHER THE BRITISH CAPTIVITIES, OR THE POSITION HE HOLDS AT JILALABAD." The Governor-General, on the 14th of May, if not before, knew that such was Mr Clerk's belief, and that it was formed upon opinions expressed by General Pollock, but he takes no notice, beyond a brief reference to it in addressing the Commander-in-Chief on the subject of General Pollock's remaining, until October, beyond the Khyber Pass, in which measure, though with some reluctance, he seems to acquiesce. But on the sight of another letter, shewing that Mr Clerk continued to hold the opinion which he had declared in the previous letter, namely, that General Pollock would not withdraw, the Governor-General is suddenly thrown into an agony of apprehension and anxiety. He has good reason, on the 14th May, for believing that General Pollock intends to follow a certain course, which he

disapproves, yet he does nothing, but waits the result with as much calmness as a Swiss herdsman expects the avalanche which is to crush his cottage to atoms, or a good Mussulman the fire which is raging three houses off, and must soon reach his own. But Mr Clerk's letter of the 18th May rouses him. Why? Thus is the question answered by the letter to General Pollock of the 29th May. "As Mr Clerk was, on the 18th instant, in possession of the orders addressed to you by the Commander-in-Chief, on the 29th ultimo, the Governor-General infers that in so expressing his belief that you would not withdraw, with the negotiations pending in your front, he had in view the paragraphs in those orders which relate to negotiations for the release of the prisoners." "The Governor-General infers!" Did he only infer? Had not Mr Clerk, in his letter to Sir Jasper Nicolls, dated the 5th May (a copy of which letter was in Lord Ellenborough's possession on the 14th), used these memorable words?—"I conclude that with the discretion vested in him (General Pollock), under your Excellency's orders, HE WILL NOT ABANDON EITHER THE BRITISH CAPTIVES OR THE POSITION HE HOLDS AT JELALABAD," and after this the Governor-General—cautious man—can only "infer" allusion to the said discretionary power. But the ground of this inference is worth looking at. "As Mr Clerk was, on the 18th instant, in possession of the orders addressed to you by the Commander-in-Chief on the 29th ultimo, the Governor-General infers," &c. Indeed Mr Clerk *was* in possession of the Commander-in-Chief's orders on the 18th of May, for he was in possession of them on the 5th, when he wrote the former letter. That letter commences "I do myself the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Excellency's letter of the 30th ultimo, enclosing a copy of your Excel-

lency's orders to Major-General Pollock, of the 29th ultimo" This letter was before Lord Ellenborough on the 14th, from it he knew that Mr Clerk had the Commander-in-Chief's orders on the 5th, and that he was of opinion that General Pollock would exercise the discretion thereby allowed, and remain at Jelalabad Yet the Governor-General, on the 29th, speaks of Mr Clerk's being in possession of those orders on the 18th as though he was ignorant of his possessing them on the 5th, and he "infers" that Mr Clerk's belief as to General Pollock's course has some reference to the discretion vested in that officer, a point distinctly noticed in the letter of the 5th, which Lord Ellenborough had lying before him fifteen days before he drew this notable inference * However, having drawn it—and the task required no extraordinary measure of sagacity—he caused General Pollock to be enlightened as to the precise limits of his discretion with regard to the prisoners The general was informed that the instructions could only apply to negotiations, almost brought to a close at the time of receiving the Commander-in-Chief's letter—not to any then pending, the event of which might be doubtful, still less to any which might be subsequently commenced The letter thus closes—"The Governor-General does not suppose that you can have misunderstood those instructions"—the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief—"but if the observation in Mr Clerk's letter of the 18th instant had been suffered to pass in silence, that silence might have appeared to be acquiescence in a wrong interpretation, and you might possibly have been so misled into adopting it"† Yet Mr Clerk's letter of the 5th, referring to what he believed to be the General's opinion as to

* Mr Clerk's letter of the 5th May does not appear in the Blue Book, but is printed as a supplementary paper

† Papers, page 295

withdrawal, was “suffered to pass in silence,” and on the 14th Lord Ellenborough had made up his mind to General Pollock’s protracted stay at Jelalabad. On the 29th he becomes frightened, and directs a letter to be written to General Pollock, warning him not to be too zealous in his endeavours to obtain the release of the prisoners. Is this the conduct of a great statesman? Is it that of a man even of plain common sense? No, it is that of a man so vacillating as to shift with every breeze, and even without any external cause for change, or so incompetent to the duties of his high charge, that all his faculties were overwhelmed, and he forgot by the end of the month what he had written at the middle of it, or, what is far worse, that of a trickster, anxious only so to play his cards as under all circumstances to exonerate himself from blame, and whatever might befall the army at Jelalabad, be able to secure his own reputation from wreck. But if this letter of the 29th May spoke the honest judgment of the Governor-General—and if it did not, let his friends find an excuse for his duplicity—it is clear that he was then anxious for the return of the army. Unless the negotiations for the release of a part—only a part—of the prisoners were complete, or nearly so, at the time of General Pollock’s receiving the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief, he was to come back. This is the purport of the letter, and happily it is so decisive, that there is no possibility of explaining away its obvious meaning, and, let it be remembered, that when these explanatory instructions were given, Lord Ellenborough knew that General Pollock was deficient in the means of moving his troops, but had excellent means of providing for their comfort where they were.

The next letter addressed to General Pollock is dated the 1st June. It treats of the continued stay of the general at Jelalabad as then a settled point, and what is

its tone? that of disappointment, chagrin, and fear “The retirement of your army,” it is observed, “immediately after the victory gained by Sir Robert Sale, the forcing of the Khyber Pass, and the relief of Jelalabad, would have had the appearance of a military operation successfully accomplished, and even triumphantly achieved Its retirement, after six months of inaction, *before a following army of Affghans*, will have an appearance of a different and less advantageous character.”* Here, again, it is plain that it was the wish of Lord Ellenborough that General Pollock should retire immediately after effecting a junction with Sir Robert Sale He not only directed this at the time, but more than six weeks after the junction had been effected, we find him lamenting that his directions had not been followed, and predicting evil from their having been neglected In this letter a melancholy acquiescence is accorded, not to the arguments in favour of the army remaining, but to the force of circumstances, which rendered it impracticable for it to move “Since circumstances seem to compel you to remain there till October,”—this is the language used under the instructions of the Governor-General

We have now to consider a letter to General Pollock, dated June 6th This, like the letter of the 29th May, is explanatory of previous orders, the Governor-General having a great horror of General Pollock’s misunderstanding his instructions Some thoughts had been entertained of making over the fort of Jelalabad to the Sikhs, and General Pollock had been instructed to give them possession if required by Mr Clerk to do so This had been adverted to in a letter from General Pollock to the secretary to the Governor-

* Papers, page 297

General and forthwith a letter is despatched, "at headlong speed" to prevent any thing so calamitous as General Pollock's concluding that he was to stay at Jhelabad till it should be decided whether the fort should be given up to the Sikhs or not. It was known that General Pollock would not move till October. The delay had been coldly and sullenly assented to, but yet on the 6th June it is deemed requisite to warn General Pollock not to delay, with reference to any arrangement with the Sikhs, his movement from Jhelabad, which was not expected to take place for four months. This is not very intelligible, but it marks very distinctly the eagerness of the Governor-General for the return of the army—an eagerness so extreme, as apparently to involve his faculties in oblivion with regard to every thing else. The answer of General Pollock, though framed in perfect accordance with the relative situations of the Governor-General and himself, yet conveys to the former a very severe though dignified reproof by a mere calm statement of facts. The general says, "Had it been in my power to retire on Peshawar, I should not have delayed doing so for the purpose of making over Jhelabad to the Sikh troops, unless the transfer could have been effected immediately. It will be observed that in my letter, No 64 (to which yours, No 313, is a reply), I have stated that, owing to the want of carriage-cattle, it was not in my power to withdraw this army."

General Nott does not appear to have been written to so frequently as General Pollock, but whenever he was addressed the tone of communication was the same—retire, retire, retire. On the 1st June, he was apprized, by order of Lord Ellenborough, that General Pollock

could not move before October On the 4th July,—and the date is remarkable—he was informed of an intended movement of General Pollock on Pesh Bolak, and subsequently in advance This communication was accompanied by a copy of the letter addressed to General Pollock on the 1st June, the letter lamenting that the latter officer had not retired immediately after his arrival at Jelalabad, and foretelling evil results from his stay, and the following reason is assigned for the transmission of this copy to General Nott—in order “that you may not be misled into the belief that any change has taken place in the main object of the instructions heretofore furnished to the major general,”* that object being to get the army away as quickly as possible On the same day (July 4th) the same steadfastness of purpose is avowed in a letter to General Pollock—“No change has from the first taken place in the Governor-General’s views of the expediency of withdrawing your army at the earliest period consistent with the health and efficiency of the troops, that is, as is now understood, at the beginning of October”†

Thus it is seen, that from the close of the month of March, or at all events from the commencement of April to the beginning of July, the instructions of the Governor-General were directed to one object—that of facilitating the retirement of the armies in Affghanistan—with little regard to national honour, and with none to the safety of the prisoners detained by the enemy

At length, the dawn of a change appears How was it brought about? Was it effected by any process of reasoning within the mind of the Governor-General, by the operation of new and unlooked-for events, or by some other cause? Certainly not by either of the two causes above re-

* Papers, page 326

† Papers, page 327

ferred to His lordship, it may be presumed, meditated on the circumstances under which he had to act, but the result was only to wed him more closely to his favourite plan of bringing back the armies in Affghanistan as early as possible. The current of events had been chequered, evil had been succeeded by good, but the Governor-General was unaffected, his views, on his own authority, were unchanged. True it is, that he continued to talk, at intervals, of "striking a blow at the enemy," and if the enemy could have been defeated by words, the Governor-General was not the man to spare them. But, at least until the month of July, he contemplated nothing beyond desultory and unconnected attacks—mere "chuppaos,"* "you may make your strength severely felt by sallies of this description, should they be practicable," it is observed in the letter to General Pollock, June 1st, "and create a strong desire on the part of the enemy"—for what? "to induce you to leave the country." Oh most lame and impotent conclusion! And is this the language of a British Governor-General of India? Let not the shades of Clive and Cornwallis and Wellesley and Hastings hear it!

But to the reasons of the change. There were men who felt that, to abandon Affghanistan without some manifestation of military power, without some effort to recover the British subjects, treacherously kidnapped into captivity, would be a national disgrace. Such men were General Pollock and General Nott. The latter officer, on first learning that an intention was entertained of retiring from Jelalabad as soon as the garrison were relieved, remonstrated. The intention, it should in justice to Lord Ellenborough be observed, was entertained before his arrival, and therefore

* A chuppao is an attack generally made by night, and for plunder a surprise, a foray.

he is accountable only for adopting it. In this part of his conduct, as in those parts which present a fairer appearance, he has no pretensions to the blame or the praise due to originality of thought. General Nott remonstrated, representing the evil effects likely to result from quitting Affghanistan under circumstances which could not fail to leave behind us an impression that retirement was the consequence of weakness. The letter conveying this remonstrance was dated the 24th March. On the 18th April, General Nott again delivered his opinion on the question, and in a manner worthy of his character. Although he had then ground for concluding that the offer of advice hostile to retreat would not be very favourably received, he did not hesitate to avow his conviction that the difficulties of prosecuting the war to a more honourable conclusion had been greatly overrated, and that "unnecessary alarm had been created respecting the position of" the troops in Affghanistan. In a passage in the former of these letters the question of immediate retirement is discussed in so just and forcible a manner, that it is due to the gallant officer to quote it: "If Government intend to recover, even temporarily and for the saving of our national honour, their lost position in this country, even if doubtful of the policy that it may be deemed expedient to pursue, I earnestly hope, that before any immediate retrograde step is made, in either direction, our whole position in Affghanistan will be attentively viewed, and that the effect which a hasty retirement would certainly and instantly have on the whole of Beloochistan, and even on the navigation of the Indus, will be taken into consideration. At the present time the impression of our military strength among the people of this country, though weakened by the occurrences at Kabool, is not destroyed, but if we now retire, and it should again become necessary

to advance, we shall labour under many disadvantages, the most serious of which, in my opinion, will be, a distrust of their strength among our soldiers, which any admission of weakness is so well calculated to induce, and in what other light could a withdrawal from Jelalabad or Kandahar be viewed? If retirement should become necessary, it should take place simultaneously and at a proper season. If Government should select Kandahar as the point whence future operations against Kabool are to be directed, still the retention of a position at Jelalabad, in considerable force, will be of the most essential service in all future contemplated operations. In the sanguine hope that some unforeseen circumstances may have occurred to postpone the execution of the Government order for the evacuation of Jelalabad, I have thought it incumbent on me to address this letter to you"* Now here it will be seen that General Nott looked to future operations against Kabool, he deemed them necessary to the vindication of his country's honour, and the retention of a position at Jelalabad in considerable force he regarded as essential to success. He did not abandon all hope of again visiting Kabool and deem retirement the only course open, as did the Governor-General, nor did he propose to run headlong for Kabool without provisions or means of carriage, a step which the Governor-General thought General Pollock might possibly have hazarded. His advice was to stand fast, retaining all the advantages which were possessed, and looking forward to employ them usefully to aid in pressing forward to Kabool when the proper time arrived. In his letter of the 18th of April, General Nott says, "Perhaps it is not within my province to observe, that, in my humble opinion, an unnecessary alarm has been created regarding

* Papers, pages 245, 246

the position of our troops in this country, and of the strength and power of the enemy we have to contend with. This enemy cannot face our troops in the field with any chance of success, however superior they may be in numbers, provided those precautions are strictly observed, which war, between a small body of disciplined soldiers and a vast crowd of untrained, unorganized, and half-civilized people, constantly renders necessary. True, the British troops suffered a dreadful disaster at Kabul, and it is not for me to presume to point out why this happened, however evident I may conceive the reasons, and the long train of military and political events which led to the sad catastrophe.* After receiving the orders to retire at once from Kandahar, General Nott was obviously in expectation that a better spirit might come over the mind of the Governor-General, and that delay might be beneficial in affording time for the transmission of counter orders. Writing to General Pollock, on the 30th May, he says, "I have withdrawn the garrison of Kelat-i-Ghilje, the order left me no discretion, the same order applies in the same positive manner to Kandahar, however, it will take some time to arrange, and before I can possibly carry it into effect, there will be ample time for the Government, should they deem it advisable, to send me other orders. I shall be prepared to ADVANCE or retire agreeably to the pleasure of Government"†

Such was the language, such the views and hopes of General Nott. What were those of General Pollock? To ascertain them it is requisite to refer to a letter from the general dated the 13th May, the fate of which was somewhat extraordinary, it having, by a very remarkable accident, strayed into a wrong bundle of papers, from which

* Papers, page 247

† Papers, pages 313, 314

retirement it did not emerge till the pertinacious and troublesome inquiries of some members of Parliament had reached Hindostan. This letter was written after the receipt by General Pollock of the Governor-General's letter, adverting to the possibility of the general having advanced to Kabool, and also after the receipt of the letter of the Commander-in-Chief, enforcing the general views of Lord Ellenborough as to the necessity for retreat. Referring to the former communication, General Pollock says, "I trust that I am not wrong in considering this letter as leaving to me discretionary powers, and coming as it does from the supreme power in India, I venture to delay for some days acting up to the instructions communicated in his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief's letter, dated 29th ultimo." The general, it will be seen, thus eagerly caught at Lord Ellenborough's allusion to the possibility of his having advanced, and construed it into a permission to delay acting up to the instructions of a later date which he had received from another quarter, and which directed him, except under certain specified circumstances, to retire. General Pollock, after adverting to the reason of his not having advanced towards Kabool, thus goes on "With regard to our withdrawal at the present moment, I fear that it would have the very worst effect, it would be construed into a defeat, and our character as a powerful nation would be entirely lost in this part of the world. It is true that the garrison at Jelalabad has been saved, which it would not have been had a force not been sent to its relief, but the relief of that garrison is only one object, there still remain others which we cannot disregard. I ALLUDE TO THE RELIEF OF THE PRISONERS." General Pollock then alludes to the negotiations in progress respecting the prisoners, and remarks, "If while these communications were in progress I

were to retire, it would be supposed that panic had seized us. I therefore think that our remaining in this vicinity (or perhaps a few marches in advance) is essential to uphold the character of the British nation, and in like manner General Nott might hold his post, at all events, till a more favourable season." Lord Ellenborough had expressed much anxiety respecting the health of the troops, and undoubtedly this was a most important consideration. General Pollock thus answers "I have no reason yet to complain that the troops are more unhealthy than they were at Agra. If I am to march to Peshawur, the climate is certainly not preferable, and here I can in one or two marches find a better climate, and I should be able to dictate better terms than I could at Peshawur." To the dread of being attacked and beaten, General Pollock was as insensible as to that of climate, but he felt deeply the necessity of the co-operation with General Nott. He says "I cannot imagine any force being sent from Kabool which I could not successfully oppose, but the advance on Kabool would require that General Nott should act in concert, and advance also. I therefore cannot help regretting that he should be directed to retire, which, without some demonstration of our power, he will find some difficulty in doing."* Thus thought General Pollock, thus did he express himself strictly in accordance with the views of General Nott, though without concert, but with what a wide difference from those entertained and avowed by the Governor-General!

It has been intimated that this letter of General Pollock met with some remarkable adventures. In the Blue Book laid before Parliament it was not to be found, but its existence was ascertained from a reference made to it in another letter, which did appear. The Marquess of Lansdowne,

* Afghanistan supplementary paper, presented to Parliament 1843

in the House of Lords, and Lord Palmerston, in the House of Commons, called for its production, but her Majesty's ministers answered that they had it not, and knew nothing about it—that they had caused search to be made for it at the East-India House, and that there also the return was *non-inventus*. This appeared strange, but there was no remedy. Neither Court nor City could furnish copy of the letter, though evidently an important one, and by what means it had failed to reach the authorities at home was but matter for fruitless conjecture. At last the Secret Committee received a letter from the Governor-General, giving the following account of the matter—the spontaneous tender of his lordship in consequence of reading the “debates in Parliament”*. “The original despatch of the 13th May never reached the office, and must have been lost in transit. The duplicate was received and acknowledged on the 11th of July. It is the practice of the Secretary's office to keep the unreported papers on all important subjects for each month together, and to forward copies of them to the Secret Committee by the monthly overland mail. The despatch in question was inadvertently put up in its proper place in the May bundle of reported papers, instead of being left for a time, as it should have been, amongst the unreported papers of July. Hence when the July papers were copied for transmission to the Secret Committee, this despatch was omitted”†. Such, according to the old rhyme,

“Is the history
Of this wonderful mystery”

This is the explanation given “on authority”. Really Indian affairs are strange matters. The paper in question

* The letter of the Governor General and that of General Pollock, then first forwarded, were laid before Parliament, and printed

† Affghanistan Supplementary Paper

gets from a place where it should be, to a place where it evidently should not be (though Lord Ellenborough calls it "the proper place"), with as much facility as we have seen a clause escape out of one Act of Parliament and creep into another. This wonderful transposition is worth looking into on account of its curiosity. "The original despatch never reached the office, and must have been lost in transit." Here we are led to ask what place it was that the despatch never reached?—"the office," but what office? Does Lord Ellenborough mean that it never reached his hands? that it was intercepted by the Affghans, whose vigilance thus occasioned such an infinity of trouble to various parties—to the Marquess of Lansdowne and Lord Palmerston in asking questions, to the Queen's Ministers in declaring themselves unable to answer them, to the clerks of the Board of Commissioners and of the East-India Company in looking for the copy of a paper of which copy never arrived, and, lastly, to Lord Ellenborough, in giving the account of the transaction above quoted? Is this his lordship's meaning, or does he mean that after he had received and read it, the despatch was lost in the course of transmission to some office where it was to be deposited? Surely, where explanation was the object, a little more clearness might have been attained. But the original despatch was lost—when, where, how—whether before or after Lord Ellenborough had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with its contents, does not appear. Now for the duplicate. "The duplicate was received and acknowledged on the 11th July," here we are at sea again. It is not quite apparent whether both the receipt and acknowledgment are to be assigned to the 11th July, or the latter only. Was the letter acknowledged on the same day on which it was received, or some time afterwards? If on the

day it was received, there seems to have been marvellous haste in acknowledging a letter which had then become stale, and which with reference to a change which had come over the policy of the Governor-General did not call for any extraordinary promptness. Yet, with reference to this change of policy, we cannot but perceive how flattering it is to the sagacity of Lord Ellenborough, that, before he was in possession of the letter of General Pollock (assuming that he did not receive it till the 11th July), he had become a convert to the opinions therein maintained, so far as to allow a practical trial to be made of their soundness. But we must proceed with the explanation —It seems that “it is the practice of the Secretary’s office to keep the unreported papers, on all important subjects, together, and to forward copies of them to the Secret Committee by the Monthly Overland Mail” Well, this “practice” appears a very natural and reasonable one, but it is to be presumed that the papers thus kept together are placed with reference to the month in which they are *received*—not according to the dates they bear. If a letter, dated in November, 1843, should happen, from any cause, not to be received till November, 1844, it would (it is to be supposed) be placed with the papers of the latter month, not of the former. How extraordinary then was it, that a letter received in July (if it were not received till then) should be transferred, “inadvertently,” to the month of May, with which it had no connection but in respect of date! What a strange inadvertency this must have been—to carry back the paper from the current month under which it ought to have been copied for transmission home to a past month—the papers of which had, as it seems, been copied and transmitted previously, or else how did this particular paper escape the process? If, indeed, the original had been received in

But perhaps Lord Ellenborough knew nothing about it—he was ignorant of such a letter ever having been written. Not so, for General Pollock, in the letter which was so fortunate as to obtain an answer (that of the 20th May), says, “I have already, in my letter dated the 13th instant, entered on the subject,”* that subject being nothing less than the withdrawal of the army from Jelalabad to Peshawur, and yet this letter receives no more notice than if it had been a complimentary note inquiring after his lordship’s health—possibly not so much. Whether his lordship had received the letter or not, his silence is alike inexplicable. If he had received it, how came he not to acknowledge the receipt—if he had not, how came he to pass over the mishap so calmly? His lordship must answer—no one else can. The despatch to the Secret Committee reporting this correspondence throws no light upon the affair, but seems to make it more mysterious. In an early part of the despatch, General Pollock’s want of carriage is noticed, and it is observed, “the season is now, however, too far advanced to make it probable that Major-General Pollock will be able to commence a retrograde movement for some months.” In a subsequent part, one of the letters of General Pollock is thus noticed: “On the 20th May, the Major-General (Pollock), in reply to the letter addressed to him on the 4th, again represented the difficulty under which he laboured in procuring camels at Jelalabad, and under the circumstances stated, requested that he might be permitted to defer his retrograde movement until the month of October or November next. But you will perceive elsewhere,† that circumstances connected with the disorganization of the Sikh troops in the rear of our

* Papers, page 296

† This refers to a letter on the subject, addressed by order of the Governor General to the Commander-in-Chief

army in Affghanistan, make me more earnestly desire the speedy return of that army to the Sutlej, and that in order to enable Major-General Pollock to meet any difficulties in procuring carriage and supplies, treasure to the amount of ten lacs has been directed to be sent to Jelalabad”* From this statement, had it stood alone, what could the Secret Committee and the Board of Commissioners have concluded? Obviously that General Pollock’s request had been refused—that he had been peremptorily ordered to return. Could they have thought that even the desponding acquiescence “since circumstances seem to compel you to remain” had been given, and taking the statement in connection with the passage first quoted, what could they make of it? Nothing consistent or intelligible, the whole seems a piece of studied mystification.

But now the curtain must rise upon a new scene in the strange drama before us—a scene, in the language of melodramatic managers, replete with striking effects. On the 4th of July we have seen that the Governor-General caused a letter to be written to General Nott cautioning him against concluding from General Pollock’s movements, that any change had taken place in the main object of the instructions issued to the latter officer, those instructions having been invariably directed to his retirement at as early a period as possible. We have seen that on that same 4th of July General Pollock was also addressed in a similar strain †. But on that very same 4th of July, the two generals were addressed in two other letters which may be regarded as unexampled specimens of political chicanery. Men may have seen something like them before, but nothing so good of the kind. The principal letter, that to General Nott, is indeed a master-piece, and the greatest adepts in that crooked science which disregards means, and looks but

* Papers, page 263

† See page 57

to ends, and those selfish ends, may hail Lord Ellenborough as a worthy brother. The Jesuits immortalized by Pascal might be delighted with him—Talleyrand give him a fraternal embrace, and Machiavelli, as belonging to a graver and less excitable nation, bestow on him a gracious smile of approval. Lord Ellenborough had always held out the retirement of the army as the chief object of his policy, and had strenuously urged that such retirement should be as early as possible. Does he continue to hold the same opinion still on this same 11th of July? He does—for he says so in the two brief and simple letters addressed on that day by his orders to the two generals, nay, more, he says the same in the second and more elaborate letter of that date to General Nott, the Jesuitical letter just introduced to the notice of the reader. Listen to him. “Nothing has occurred to induce me to change my first opinion, that the measure, commanded by considerations of political and military prudence, is to bring back the armies now in Affghanistan at the earliest period at which their retirement can be effected consistently with the health and efficiency of the troops, into positions wherein they may have easy and certain communication with India, and to this extent the instructions you have received remain unaltered”*. “To this extent”—What extent? To bring back the armies to proximity with India as soon as possible. There is no limitation here—it is, in the more expressive than elegant phraseology of our brother across the Atlantic, “going the whole hog.” Get back the troops as soon as you can is the substance, albeit, dilated in diplomatic fashion, it occupies more space than these simple words. “But,” his Lordship commences his next sentence—Touchstone proves that there is great virtue in an “if,” and a voice from Allaha-

* See page 328

bad demonstrates—practically, too, the best of all modes of demonstration—the virtue of a “but” “But the improved position of your army, with sufficient means of carriage for as large a force as it is necessary to move in Affghanistan, induces me now to leave to your option the line by which you shall withdraw your troops from that country” This reads well, the general, as a military man, and acquainted with the localities, might undoubtedly be a better judge upon such a matter than the most richly gifted Governor-General not thus qualified Lord Ellenborough proceeds to speak of the line by Quetta and Sukkur, which he pronounces eligible—and so for mere retreat it might be He then passes to another line, and the description of it almost takes away the breath of the reader The line is by Ghuznee, Kabool, and Jelalabad! This—let all attention be given—this is laid down as a line of retirement from Kandahar to India, and being laid down by such eminent authority, it is not to be disputed that it is such a line, though certainly not the nearest, nor the most direct It is as though a man at Gloucester should say, “I’ll retire to London, and I think the best line will be by Birmingham and Manchester” Well, let us admit that General Nott, in going from Kandahar to Ghuznee, and from Ghuznee to Kabool, is to be considered as retiring upon India. It is hard, very hard, to receive, but it is nothing compared with what must yet be submitted to General Nott’s line is marked out, but what is to become of General Pollock? He, too, must retire, and his presence has long been required in Peshawur, with all convenient speed (perhaps the qualifying epithet might have been omitted) Of course, now that he is provided with the means of carriage, he is at once to take the retrograde step, the necessity for which has been so unceasingly rung in his unwilling ears Yes, General Pol-

lock is to retire, but not *immediately*, to Peshawur He is to vary his line of march—slightly,—by a deviation in the direction of Kabool ' Perhaps he may reach that place, memorable from the atrocities of which it was the scene, perhaps he may not reach quite so far, as the purpose of his *retiring* in this direction is represented as being to support General Nott—but towards Kabool is his course Retire from Jelalabad towards India by Kabool ' To adopt the mode of illustration before resorted to, this is as though a man at Northampton should talk of retiring to London by way of York Every mile he traverses carries him away from the place that he says he is going to, nor has he the pretence afforded by a movement somewhat oblique to set his conscience at rest He is going away from the place that he professes to be anxious to reach, in a manner most direct, palpable, and undisguised, that can be conceived He does not cast even a sidelong glance towards the avowed point of his destination, he turns his back upon it, and must know what he is about But there is a result, which evidently follows, from the mode of speaking adopted by Lord Ellenborough on this occasion, of which, perhaps, even he was not aware The marches of General Nott and of General Pollock to Kabool were marches made in retirement—that is settled—well then, the march of Lord Keane was the same,—we are accustomed to speak of this as an advance, but it is now clear that we have been wrong,—General Pollock and General Nott marched to Kabool, and these marches were steps in retirement Lord Keane made a similar march, and, therefore, his lordship must also have been retiring. though, so blindly infatuated have we always been, that we have regarded his march as an advance It is useless to say that the two Generals, Pollock and Nott, did not mean to remain, that they were only to perform

certain acts, and then to evacuate the country This does not convert an advance into a retreat, and, moreover, this was precisely what was contemplated in the case of Lord Keane and his army They were not to remain, they were to fix Shah Shoojah on the throne, and then to withdraw But stifling for a time—if we can—the laugh of derision which such perversion of language cannot fail to raise, let us ask, why was this contemptible juggling with words resorted to? The answer is plain—to save the infallibility of Lord Ellenborough He had been for months saying that there was no course but retreat, and he continued to say so when forced by a regard to his reputation to yield—not to the more mature dictates of his own judgment—but to the counsels of others, and to change his policy He thought the change might be masked—so he goes on still preaching retreat, but giving a new gloss to the old text Retreat was still the word—the decree for its accomplishment had gone forth—but—the line of retreat was open—and what an extraordinary line it was has been already shewn But to forget for a moment—if possible—the astounding audacity of this proceeding, let us look at the consistency which marked it A letter is written to General Nott on the 4th July, telling him that the Governor-General's mind is unaltered, and that he must not conclude otherwise from any movement of General Pollock Another letter is written on the same day, giving the general permission either to act in accordance with the Governor-General's views which remained unchangeable, or to follow his own The latter letter is not placed upon record, which Lord Ellenborough seems to think a marvellously deep piece of policy Why was it not placed upon record? Was it to keep its contents entirely secret? Secrecy is a good thing in such cases, but the danger to be apprehended

was not likely to be provoked by the letter giving sanction—coldly and hesitatingly and reluctantly, indeed, but still giving it to a bold and manly course of action, the source of danger was to be found in the timid and cowering instructions for retreat. The generals invariably urge, that the design to retreat should, as far as possible, be concealed from the enemy—that the knowledge of such a design would embolden them, while the apprehension of more vigorous proceedings would keep them in a state of alarm. It was therefore the letters which contained the whining deprecations of any protracted occupation of the country that ought to have been kept especially secret,—but these were brought upon record, while that which allowed the generals to prosecute the war to an honourable conclusion—though with a sword suspended over their heads,—was deemed so dangerous, that for this or some other reason, it was for a time kept back.

So dishonest a paper as the second letter, addressed, on the 4th July, 1842, by Lord Ellenborough to General Nott, has rarely seen the light, but dishonesty is not its only characteristic, it is ungenerous to a degree that could not have been expected in a man holding the office of Governor-General of India. Lord Ellenborough casts from himself all responsibility, and throws it upon General Nott. Most judiciously was the burden bestowed, but ought a Governor-General of India thus to relieve himself at the expense of one under his orders? His lordship knew that if the armies in Affghamistan were brought back without making some demonstration of their power, and without some attempt to rescue the prisoners, he should be met by a universal shout of execration from his countrymen at home, but he shrunk from the responsibility of directing any measures necessary for the vindication of the

national honour, so he hit upon the expedient of leaving all to General Nott. He saws and balances through a letter of considerable length, and at last comes to no conclusion but that of advising nothing. Let the reader judge. After stating that he left to the general's "option" the choice of a line of retreat, he thus proceeds — "I must desire, however, that in forming your decision upon this most important question, you will attend to the following considerations — In the direction of Quetta and Sukkur, there is no enemy to oppose you. At each place, occupied by detachments, you will find provisions, and probably as you descend the passes, you will have increased means of carriage. The operation is one admitting of no doubt as to its success. If you determine upon moving upon Ghuznee, Kabool, and Jelalabad, you will require for the transport of provisions a much larger amount of carriage, and you will be practically without communications from the time of your leaving Kandahar. Dependent entirely upon the courage of your army, and upon your own ability in directing it, I should not have any doubt as to the success of the operation, but whether you will be able to obtain provisions for your troops, during the whole march, and forage for your animals, may be a matter of reasonable doubt. Yet upon this your success will turn. You must remember that it was not the superior courage of the Affghans, but want, and the inclemency of the season, which led to the destruction of the army at Kabool, and you must feel as I do, that the loss of another army, from whatever cause it might arise, might be fatal to our Government in India. I do not undervalue the aid which our Government in India would receive from the successful execution by your army of a march through Ghuznee and Kabool, over the scenes of our late disasters. I know all the effect which it

would have upon the minds of our soldiers, of our allies, of our enemies in Asia, and of our countrymen, and of all foreign nations in Europe. It is an object of just ambition, which no one more than myself would rejoice to see effected, but I see that failure in the attempt is certain and irretrievable ruin, and I would endeavour to inspire you with the necessary caution, and make you feel that, great as are the objects to be obtained by success, the risk is great also. * Now this language is substantially—"I have set before you the advantages and disadvantages of every conceivable course—do as you please, but take care that what you do is the best that can possibly be done." Let us mark the generosity of this proceeding—suppose that General Nott had participated in the more than girlish timidity of Lord Ellenborough, and had said—"I can get back in safety to Sukkur, so I will run no risk by trying to reach Kalool—he then would have incurred all the odium attendant on so inglorious an abandonment of Affghanistan. It would have been said—"you had permission to go on, and you did not." The Governor-General would thus have been exonerated, and now that he has found men more courageous than himself—men who dared to perform what he did not even dare to recommend, shall he enjoy any portion of the praise due to their noble conduct? Justice forbids it. What, give the prize to one who never entered the lists, or even divide it between the gallant soldiers to whose counsel the movement is to be attributed, as is its success to their arms—divide it between these distinguished men and "a certain lord, neat, trimly drest," whose dislike "to those vile guns" was so great that he thought it better to fly than to fight! Honour, never-dying honour, rest on the heroes who rescued the British name in Affghanistan from the contempt

into which it had fallen ' but let not another, presuming upon the accident of his having at the time held the highest office in the government of British India, be allowed to step in, and rob them of any portion of the glory which is theirs, and theirs alone

Is there on record any parallel to the conduct of Lord Ellenborough? Yes, one instance occurs. The readers of Roderick Random will remember, that while that erratic person is serving as a surgeon's mate on board a man-of-war, his superior, one Dr Macshane, proposes to amputate a sailor's leg, in a case where Roderick and one of his comrades do not think the operation necessary. The doctor, shocked at the contumacy of his assistants, at first talks big, and declares that he is not accountable to them for his practice, but not feeling quite secure in his own judgment, and not liking to bear the responsibility of operating in opposition to theirs, he, after slight consideration, hits upon the expedient of turning the case over to his mates, and holding them accountable for the result. Just so did Lord Ellenborough. He gives orders, against which remonstrance is made by those who are to execute them. He persists for a while, and then, in conformity with the precedent afforded by the case of Dr Macshane, he lets his troublesome advisers do as they please, but saddles the concession with a complete transfer of all responsibility from himself. Jack Ratlin, the wounded sailor, recovered under the hands of the two mates—no thanks to Dr Macshane. The honour of England was vindicated in Affghanistan—but no thanks to Lord Ellenborough. He renounced all claim to praise by renouncing all responsibility. He would have nothing to do with the march to Kabool. Like the sceptical Philosopher Marphurius, in *Le Mariage Forcé*, he said, "*Je m'en lave les mains,*" though with far

better luck, Molierc's hero received a hearty thrashing for his indifference,—

“ But yet, as fortune, by the self same ways
She humbles many, some delights to raise,”

Lord Ellenborough, by a like manifestation, gains an Earl's coronet, and a Grand Cross of the Bath

Yet indifferent as was Lord Ellenborough to some things, which appealed powerfully to the feelings of men inferior in rank to the Governor General of India, it must not be supposed that he was on all subjects equally philosophical. He was not such “ a dish of skimmed-milk ” but that there were matters capable of moving him, and the letter to General Nott affords an instance. Anticipating that the general would be so hot-headed as to advance upon Ghuznee and Kibool—to *retreat* by way of these places it should have been said—anticipating this movement, Lord Ellenborough thus instructs the gallant officer upon a very important point relating to his conduct at the former place “ You will bring away from the tomb of Mahmood of Ghuznee his club which hangs over it, and you will bring away the gates of his tomb, which are the gates of the temple of Somnauth ”* Let the defamers of Lord Ellenborough now stand forth and say, if they dare, that he is without enthusiasm. The charge is false. His enthusiasm may be of extraordinary character—it may require extraordinary occasions to call it forth—but it is clear that it may be called forth. Though it may slumber long, it exists. True, that the reparation of the damaged honour of Great Britain did not provoke it, true, that it was proof against the claims of the brave men, delicate women, and innocent children who were in captivity among the Afghans, but it is raised to boiling-heat by the thoughts of a mouldy old club and a pair of

rotten gates No, it would be wrong to charge Lord Ellenborough with being deficient in generous enthusiasm, but the feeling is in him of a singular kind The club, alas ! eluded the grasp of the victors of Ghuznee, but the gates—thrice happy chance ! were taken, a fact as well known as John Gilpin's ride to Ware and back again

“ I am a linen-draper bold,
As all the world doth know ”

And Lord Ellenborough took good care that all the world should know the story of the gates of Somnauth The Hindoo princes, he thought, would be delighted with it, and he rushed to electrify them with the good news as eagerly as ancient Pistol to communicate to Sir John Falstaff the news of the accession to the throne of his old boon companion, Henry the Fifth

“ Sir John, I am thy Pistol and thy friend,
And helter-skelter have I rode to thee,
And tidings do I bring, and lucky joy,
And golden times, and happy news of price. ’

But ancient Pistol never uttered such fustian as is to be found in a certain Indian state paper Who has forgotten the famous proclamation which threw Europe, Asia, and America, into apoplectic fits of laughter, except when the risible propensity was subdued by rising feelings of disgust or apprehension ? That a Christian nobleman should have dictated such a proclamation and sent it forth, with the stamp of his authority, is indeed calculated to excite impressions of deep regret, not less than of surprise But that any man, except the concoctor of a low American newspaper—one of the fraternity transatlantically denominated *Slangwhangers*—could have written such a paper, would have exceeded belief were not the fact before us If there be in existence any state paper with which it may fitly be

compared, it must have emanated from the cabinet of King Chrononhotonthologos. But to this sounding prelude what succeeded? The parading of the gates was to delight Lord Ellenborough's "brothers and friends,"—so he styled them—the Hindoo princes and chiefs. Did it answer the purpose? Far from it. His lordship's enthusiasm was shared by none. No man in India but himself cared for these gates, or deemed them worth a thought. To him they furnished a stand on which to hang the flowers of Bedlam eloquence, and there their importance ended. They slumber in obscurity, no one knows where. Certainly they have not been honoured with a triumphal progress into Guzerat, as Lord Ellenborough proposed, and it seems that if they had, there is no temple for them!

The folly of this unparalleled proclamation is obvious enough—the political danger attending its issue is not less apparent. His lordship had a keen scent for danger when British honour was to be vindicated and British prisoners rescued. How came his apprehensions to be lulled into insensibility when he prepared this extraordinary paper? Did his lordship think that in this proclamation he should carry with him the feelings of the Mahomedan subjects of the British Crown? Did it never occur to him that the almost divine honours claimed for a trumpery piece of carpenter's work might be offensive to those who, though aliens from the Christian fold, have yet a deep horror of idolatry, and of all that ministers to it? Did he overlook the fact, that the capture of these gates, if a triumph for the Hindoos, was a triumph over the Mahomedans, or did he think that there was no danger in irritating the latter? Did he forget how proud and excitable is the Mahomedan character—that those by whom the gates of Somnauth were carried to Ghuznee

were followers of Mahomed, and that the original capture of the gates, like their recapture, was less a national than a religious cause of triumph? Did he forget that thousands of Mahomedans were serving in the British armies, and that it was scarcely worth while to offend them for the sake of trumpeting the march of the gates, of which the tomb of Mahmood the Destroyer had been despoiled, even though the tomb his lordship assured his "brothers and friends 'looked' upon the ruins of Ghuznee,"—an extraordinary proceeding on the part of the tomb. Did he forget his own declaration—surely he could not forget *that* whatever else might slip from his memory, that the war had "assumed a religious as well as national character?"* or did he disregard the possible consequences of disgusting a host of bold, reckless, uncalculating men, whose "brothers and friends" in Afghanistan professed, like themselves, the creed of Mahomed? True, no harm has followed. The Mahomedan population of India have cast aside their ordinary gravity, and, like all the world beside, laughed at the mad effusion which the Governor-General thought would please everybody, and found to please nobody. But because no mischief has ensued, are we to acquit the man who provoked it? A burning brand may be thrown into a mass of combustibles, and it may happen that the mass does not take fire, but we do not thereupon conclude that the application of the brand was a prudent or even an innocent act. Lord Ellenborough's proclamation has turned out only a good jest, but it might have been no jest at all. There would have been nothing like a jest in a widely-spread Mahomedan revolt. We might have been satisfied, as we are now, that Lord Ellenborough did not intend to produce such an out-

* Letter to Sir Jasper Nicolls, 15th March, 1842. Papers, page 167

break—that his lordship, in fact, meant nothing by his proclamation—that it was a mere flourish of words, as unmeaning as a flourish of trumpets, but had an insurrection followed, it would have consoled us little to recollect that it had no more dignified origin than the passion of a Governor-General for writing turgid nonsense

There was another proclamation issued a few months before, something in the same strain with the Somnauth paper. One passage is very characteristic of the author “Disasters unparalleled in their extent, unless by the errors in which they originated, and the treachery by which they were completed, have, in one short campaign, been avenged upon every scene of past misfortune” Now did it become the Governor-General of India thus publicly to cast a stigma on his predecessor, whoever he might have been? It is not necessary to defend the policy of Lord Auckland—many, and among them some of the highest authorities on Indian affairs, condemn that policy—but, whether it were right or wrong, Lord Ellenborough had no right to sit in judgment upon it—no official right, he might hold his own opinion, he might express that opinion to his friends, or after he had quitted office, not before—he might have diffused it by means of the press, but as Governor-General of India, Lord Ellenborough had no right publicly to criticise his predecessor. The bad taste of the proceeding is aggravated by the character of the party attacked. The administration of Lord Auckland terminated amid clouds, but who is there of any party who will deny to his lordship the character of an upright, conscientious, and intelligent functionary? Moreover, Lord Auckland was eminently a modest and unassuming statesman. Oh! how unlike, in this respect, to his successor

Towards the conclusion of this proclamation, the first in

order of time, though the second noticed, are two intimations of very singular character viewed in connection with that which has followed. The first of them is to the effect that "the rivers of the Punjaub and the Indus" are to "be placed between a British army and an enemy approaching from the West." The Indus, therefore, is to be one of the boundaries of British territory and occupation. The sentence immediately preceding the passage above quoted commences thus—"Content with the limits nature appears to have assigned to its empire, the Government of India will devote all its efforts to the establishment and maintenance of general PEACE." This last word brings us to the second point, which is prominently put forward in the sentence with which the proclamation concludes—"Sincerely attached to peace, for the sake of the benefits it confers upon the people, the Governor-General is resolved that PEACE shall be observed." Here are two things pronounced distinctly, first, that Lord Ellenborough would regard the Indus as a natural boundary of the British Empire in the East, and secondly, that his policy should be pacific—

"The lady doth protest too much, methinks,
Oh ! but she'll keep her word"

Let us see how the Governor-General kept his. Peace had been his unceasing song. He had sung it after dinner at the London Tavern when about to proceed to India, and he continued to encore himself upon all fitting occasions, and some unfitting ones, after he arrived in that country. He would have purchased peace with Affghanistan, even though national dishonour were the price. He afterwards became more warlike. The military had gained laurels in Affghanistan, a portion of which he transferred to his own brows, but while they were ripening, a series of events were in progress in Sind, which, in their termination,

illustrated, in a most extraordinary manner, both the consistency of his lordship's professions with his actions, and the pacific character of his policy

Sinde had been for many years under a government of an extraordinary character. It was divided into three states—Hydrabad, Kharpoor, and Meerpoor, subject to rulers called Ameers, some of whom exercised the powers of sovereignty in undivided tenancy. Of these states, Hydrabad was the chief. The East-India Company long maintained some commercial intercourse with Sinde, but no political connection subsisted between the Company's government and that of any of the states of Sinde till the year 1809, when, it being an important object to keep the French from gaining any footing in India, a treaty was concluded by which the rulers of Hydrabad bound themselves not to admit that people to settle in their country. In 1820, another treaty was concluded by which all Europeans and Americans were to be excluded from settling in the dominions of Sinde. In 1832, it being an object with the British Government to open the navigation of the Indus, another treaty was concluded, by which that object was attained, subject to three conditions—the exclusion of the transit of military stores by the river as well as by the roads of Sinde—the exclusion of armed vessels, and the prohibition of English merchants settling in the country. By another treaty with Kharpoor, the passage of the river was conceded upon the same terms as might be agreed upon with the Government of Hydrabad. A supplementary treaty having reference especially to the tolls to be levied, was concluded with the Hydrabad Government very soon after the former treaty, and in 1834, a commercial treaty, in conformity with a provision in the supplementary one, was entered into with the same state, and extended to

Khyrpoor, as previously agreed upon In 1838, another treaty was formed, by which the British Government undertook to use its good offices to adjust differences existing between the Ameers and Runjeet Singh, the Sikh ruler, who meditated the extension of his conquests in the direction of Sindé By this treaty, also, the Ameers agreed, for the first time, to receive permanently a British minister to reside at Hyderabad, or elsewhere within their dominions, as he might deem expedient

Sinde was formerly a dependency of the Mogul empire About the middle of the last century it became subject to Kabool, but from the weakness of the Government of that country, the dependency was little more than nominal When the British Government resolved to support the claims of Shah Shoojah, and reinstate him in possession of his dominions, it was deemed necessary to settle the relation of Sindé with Kabool, and accordingly, by an article in the Tripartite treaty, to which the British Government, Runjeet Singh, and Shoojah-ool-Moolk were parties, it was provided that, on the payment, by the Ameers, to Shoojah-ool-Moolk of a sum to be fixed under the mediation of the British Government (part of which was to be paid by Shoojah to Runjeet Singh), all the claims of the ruler of Kabool upon Sindé, whether of supremacy or for tribute, were to be relinquished, and the country was to continue to belong to the Ameers and their successors in perpetuity.

The conclusion of this treaty, and the mode in which their interests were affected by it, were communicated to the Ameers by the British minister at Hyderabad, who was instructed, also, to announce the approach of the army intended to reseat Shah Shoojah on the throne of Kabool A long course of diplomatic proceedings, varied by sundry hostile acts on the part of the British Government, too

Proceeding onward, we find another letter addressed by order of his lordship to the political agent in Sind, under date the 22nd May. The British, as is well known, had, on advancing upon Affghanistan, taken possession of certain towns and fortresses belonging to the Ameers of Sind. Whether this were justifiable or not, this is not the place to inquire, but this much is quite certain without any inquiry, that we had possessed ourselves of these places avowedly for military purposes, and that our retention of them was professedly only temporary. In the letter last referred to, the political agent in Sind is thus instructed: "In any future negotiation with the Ameers of Khyrpoor, you will therefore bear in mind that it is the wish of the Governor-General to possess the island of Bukkur and the town of Sukkur, with such an ample *arrondissement* as may give every facility for the maintenance of a good police within the town, and for the formation of commercial establishments therein, regard being had likewise to the changing character of the Indus, and the necessity of providing for every variation in the course of that river which the localities make it possible to foresee. The island of Bukkur would be considered as a citadel and arsenal of the town of Sukkur, and should be rendered easily defensible by a small force."* If advantage should be taken of an expression in a previous part of this letter, "his lordship feels that it will be necessary, *at least until the affairs of Affghanistan shall assume a more settled and satisfactory form*, to retain a position on the Indus, and to have the means of acting upon both banks"—if advantage be taken of the above qualification to say that Lord Ellenborough meant to retain possession of certain parts of Sind only for a limited period, an answer is furnished by himself in the following passage from the latter part of his letter: "The

* Correspondence, page 350

Governor-General would consider that it would be a most desirable arrangement if, in lieu of all tribute payable, under treaty or otherwise, by the Ameers of Sindh and of Khairpur, such cessions of territory as may be necessary were made to us at Kurreechee, the island of Bukkur, and the town of Sukkur, and all claims to tribute payable by the Ameers to us, or to any other power, were, after such cessions, to be cancelled, in consideration of the establishment of the perpetual freedom of trade upon the Indus, and of such other provisions for the freedom of transit through their respective territories as it might appear expedient to make.* Thus it is obvious that even at this early period of his administration Lord Ellenborough contemplated permanent territorial acquisition in Sindh.

On the 4th of June we have another letter to the political agent in Sindh, in which his lordship is represented as "resolved to keep every thing within the Lower Indus in his hands." In this letter he inquires "whether the territories under Meer Roostum Khan be in such a position as to make it easy to annex a portion thereof to the dominions of the Khan of Bhawalpore, whose dominions his lordship is desirous of increasing, in reward for his own uniform fidelity and that of his ancestors."† Here we find Lord Ellenborough treating the dominions of the Ameers as though they were his own—not only assigning as much as he thought fit to the Government of which he was the representative and head, but proposing to carve them out for the benefit of others, provided that they lay conveniently for the purpose.

Shortly after this, the reader of the Sindh correspondence is treated with a specimen of his lordship's usual vacillation. A letter addressed to the political agent on the 10th of

* Correspondence, page 370

July concludes thus: "After all, it will be a matter for consideration, before the final instructions shall be issued to you, whether any probable benefit to be ever derived from the treaty could compensate for the annual expenditure which would be brought upon the Government of India by the maintenance of a large force at Sukkur and Kurachee"*. On the 22nd May, the Governor-General had been most anxious to retain possession of Kurachee, Bukkur, and Sukkur. But between that date and the 22nd July, "consideration like an angel came," and he began to doubt whether these places were worth the expense of keeping.

A new actor, and one destined to play a very important part, now appears on the stage. This is Sir Charles Napier. This functionary was not only to hold the chief military command in Sind and Beloochistan, but within those limits was to "exercise entire authority over all political and civil officers." Such are the instructions of the Governor-General, dated the 26th August. They conclude thus: "It may be convenient that you should at once be informed that, if the Ameers, or any one of them, should act hostilely, or evince hostile designs against our army, it is my fixed resolution never to forgive the breach of faith, and to exact a penalty which shall be a warning to every chief in India. On the other hand, it is my intention to seize the first opportunity of bestowing substantial benefits upon the Khan of Bhawalpore, as a reward for the constant support which the British Government has received from him and his ancestors"†. Here the old spirit again breaks out. 'The Ameers had as yet not gone the length which would afford a decent pretence for depriving them of their territory, but the eye of Sir Charles Napier was to be kept on them in the hope that they would. The

* Correspondence, page 381

† Ibid page 384

fruit was not quite ripe, but it was to be watched till it could be gathered with some appearance of propriety, and when the much-desired opportunity arrived of stripping the tree, a friend and neighbour was to be thought of, and a good basket-full of the produce handed over to him. These things it was “convenient”—that is the word—that Sir Charles Napier should know. That Sir Charles Napier might be informed of every thing that the Ameers had done of a hostile character, and even of every thing that *might be so construed*, Major Outram was, on 1st September, instructed to “explain to the major-general (Napier) the actual state of things, shewing him what had been done by the Ameers and chiefs, in pursuance of the treaties, and place before him, with *judicial accuracy*, the several acts whereby the Ameers and chiefs may have seemed to depart from the terms or *spirit* of their engagements, and to have evinced hostility or unfriendliness towards the Government of India”*. One might suppose that this was an extract from a letter to an attorney, directing him to lay before counsel a statement of facts, for the purpose of framing a criminal indictment. Of these instructions to Major Outram, Sir Charles Napier was advised, in a letter reiterating the Governor-General’s determination to inflict signal punishment upon any of the chiefs who might have evinced hostile designs†. Indeed, these denunciations of “signal punishment” occur so frequently in his lordship’s communications respecting Sind, as to mark beyond the possibility of mistake the feelings and intentions which were cherished by him.

On the 23rd October, the desire which the Governor-General had long felt, of being munificent at the expense of others, is found prevailing in great activity. In a letter of that date, to Sir Charles Napier, he says, “I am very anxious to be enabled, as the result of any new arrangement with the

* Correspondence, page 385

† Ibid page 386

Ameers, to have at my disposal the Pergunnahs of Bhoong Bhara, and, if possible, Subzulkote likewise, in order to bestow them in free gift upon the Khan of Bhawulpore. No chief in India deserves so well of the British Government as that Khan. He and his family have been faithful for three generations, and I know no measure which would be so conducive to our reputation and influence (certainly there is none that would be so gratifying to myself) as to be enabled to make this gift to him. The cession should be made to us, and then we should give it over to the Khan, and, as there may be some difficulty in the proposed arrangement with the Ameers, it would be better to say nothing to the Khan till the thing is done”*. The Governor-General is “very anxious” to get a portion of the property of the Ameers of Sind to give away to a third party, because that third party deserved well of the British Government. Nothing, he thinks, would conduce so much to “our reputation” as to take from John and give to Peter! “The cession should be made to us, and then we should give it over to the Khan!” Let us by threats or cajolery get possession of something that does not belong to us, for the sake of generously bestowing it upon a friend. The exercise of gratitude is as delightful as it is respectable, and it is the more delightful (though perchance not the more respectable) when it can be indulged, not at our own proper cost, but at that of our neighbours. This is the morality of a British Governor-General who flourished in India in the year 1842.

Under the same date, the 23rd October, another letter to Sir Charles Napier occurs, in which his lordship says, “I am inclined to think that the Ameer Nusseer Khan will be so wrong-headed, or so ill-advised, as to persist in refusing to observe the conditions of the treaty, in which case

* Correspondence, page 392

which we may occupy our present camps is unlimited,"—true, Sir Charles, true, but surely you are aware that the occupation was always professed to be temporary, though no precise time was fixed for its conclusion. Having always professed an intention to depart as soon as the circumstances which led to your presence shall have ceased, will you stay for ever, because the exact moment for your departure has never been determined? This would be just what we should look for in a Mahratta visitor—first to get a temporary footing, then to make it permanent, but from the Government of British India we expect something better. If honour and good faith find no place beside in India, let them at least irradiate the counsels of British statesmen and British soldiers, whether they emanate from Calcutta, from Simla, or from Sukkur. You will not force one party to observe the strict letter of a treaty, and claim for yourself the privilege of violating its spirit, together with an understanding so distinct as to have acquired almost the force of a formal treaty! Yes, even this is what is recommended. The position that the time for the stay of the British army is not limited, is laid down, not as an idle display of dialectic sagacity, but as a basis on which to rest a most formidable scheme of aggression. Sir Charles Napier's argument may be stated, in an abridged form, thus —If we depart, we must soon come back, therefore we ought to stay. If we stay, our camps will grow into towns, and the inhabitants will engross all the trade of the Indus. These towns will flourish, while the territory of the Ameers will decay. The rival governments will quarrel, and the stronger will swallow up the weaker. This is all very straightforward, and having brought his *sortes* to a conclusion, Sir Charles asks, "If this reasoning be correct, would it not be better to come to

the results at once?" And he answers, "I think it would be better, if it can be done with honesty." Now this qualification is somewhat embarrassing—but Sir Charles Napier is too experienced a fictionist, and too brave a man, to despair. He proves to his own satisfaction that the Amcerrs deserved all that he proposed to bring upon them, because they were charged with certain acts of apparent hostility, some of which were very questionable in point of fact, while others were of very trifling nature, and further, because they had a passion for hunting, rivalling that of even our William the First. The fact is, that both the Governor-General and the chief military and political functionary in Sindh had made up their minds to a particular course—and this being the case, there was no difficulty in finding reasons to justify it. It is but a new illustration of the old fable of the Lion and the Lamb. The stronger animal wanted a meal, and the cruelty of hunger readily furnished him with pretexts for gratifying his appetite. So Sindh was coveted, and a pretext for taking the whole, or a part was eagerly sought for, and, it is unnecessary to say, not sought in vain. Sir Charles Napier, who, to render him justice, speaks out with most soldierly frankness, says, "I have maintained that we want only a fair pretext to coerce the Amcerrs"* And again—"They have broken treaties"—as he proposed to break the implied obligation to depart at a proper time—"they have given a pretext," and the Governor-General, under whom Sir Charles Napier served, was not more slow in laying hold of it than was Sir Charles in advising such a step.

Still some degree of caution was to be observed, greatly as the object was desired, there was danger of going too fast. What instructions Lord Ellenborough carried from

* Correspondence, page 395

home cannot be known, but apart from all fear on this head, there were grounds for hesitation sufficient to make even the most quixotic pause. There was the Court of Directors of the East-India Company watching the proceedings of their Governor-General, there were the Proprietors of East-India Stock, there was the Press of England, there was the British Parliament, and there was the whole body of the British people. The Ameers, too, were not so hostile as they ought to have been. "The Ameers," says Sir Charles Napier, writing to the Governor-General on the 8th of November, "have not committed any overt act,"* but there was some comfort, inasmuch as it was to be hoped that they would. "If they refuse to listen to reason," he shortly afterwards observes, "if they persist in sacrificing every thing to their avarice and their shikargahs, or hunting grounds, they must even have their way, and try the force of arms at their peril, if so they are resolved"†

And truly the crisis was approaching. From the time of his arrival in India, the Governor-General had marked out Sind for a prey. In furtherance of the *denouement* which had long been foreseen and prepared, the existing treaties were voted obsolete and inapplicable to the then state of affairs, and new ones were submitted to the unhappy Ameers, which, it was anticipated, they would reject. This is evident from the letter of Lord Ellenborough to the Secret Committee, of the 19th of November, 1842, wherein he says "I cannot but apprehend that the Ameers of Hydrabad and Khyrpoor will resist the imposition of the terms I have deemed it just and expedient to demand from them, in consequence of the violations of treaty, and the *acts of intended hostility*, of which *they appear* to have been guilty"‡. Surely this is strange

* Correspondence, p 476

† Ibid p 476

‡ Ibid p 488

phraseology What a confusion of intention and action !
 “ Acts of intended hostility ! ” Was it mere intention that
 was imputed to the Ameers ? If so, what is meant by
 “ acts ? ” Or had they actually manifested their hostility
 by overt acts ? If so, what means the word “ intended ? ”
 But passing this, how hesitating, qualified, and unsatisfac-
 tory, is the mode in which these intentions or actions, or
 whatever they were, are spoken of ! “ Acts of intended
 hostility of which they *appear* to have been guilty ” So
 then the Governor-General was not quite sure Appearances
 indeed were, in his judgment, against the Ameers—there
 was ground for suspicion—was there not ground for doubt
 on the other side ? Would he visit mere appearance with
 severe punishment and call this “ just and expedient ! ”
 This is a revival of “ Lydford Law,” hang the accused
 first, and try him afterwards

But what sort of terms were those which Lord Ellen-
 borough expected would be rejected by the Ameers ? They
 were terms nearly as offensive as it was possible to frame
 Nothing short of the total deprivation of territory and sove-
 reignty could exceed them in this respect The Ameers
 were to be relieved of all pecuniary payments, and this
 article, naturally enough considering who framed them,
 parades conspicuously in the very front of the drafts of
 the revised treaties This is the single sweetener thrown
 into the bitter potion which the unfortunate Ameers were
 called upon to swallow Tribute was to cease, but, in con-
 formity with views long entertained and avowed, large ces-
 sions of territory were required—a sacrifice known to be
 most hateful to the Ameers With regard to the portions
 of territory to be held by the English, the Ameers were to
 be entirely at the mercy of those who demanded them, for the
 limits were not defined in the draft of treaty, nor were they

to be determined by commissioners chosen by the parties respectively interested, but by the agent of one of them, namely, by Sir Charles Napier ! Was ever such a mode of dealing heard of ? The representative of the British Government in India walks into the country of a power with whom his Government has for some years maintained friendly relations, and which relations are about to be revised—only revised—and says, “ I am instructed to take a portion of your territory—I cannot, at present, tell you how much, I must see how much we want—in the meantime there is a treaty which you are to sign without muttering a word of dislike ” This course of proceeding placed the Ameers in worse than a state of vassalage The draft of treaty would seem to have been studiously drawn with a view to give to them as much pain as possible—to give the deepest wound to their feelings of self-respect, and to add to their humiliation every ingredient of bitterness of which it was susceptible They were to relinquish the right of coining money, one of the most valued appendages of sovereignty—the British Government were to coin it for them, and none but the rupee thus specially coined and the Company’s rupee were to circulate in Sindé The very coin which passed from hand to hand among the subjects of the Ameers was to testify to their degradation Further, they were to supply, at a price to be fixed, fire-wood, for the purpose of steam navigation, in whatever quantities the officers of the British Government might from time to time require, and failing in this, those officers were to be empowered to cut down wood within a specified distance of the river—an exercise of which power would have had the effect of destroying the shikarzars, or hunting preserves, in which these princes delighted. Such was the mode in which Lord Ellenborough proposed to treat a power with which he was ostensibly

desirous of maintaining friendly terms If this treaty were a specimen of his friendship, what must his enmity be? It is worth while to see what account the Governor-General gives of the matter In a letter to Sir Charles Napier, dated November 4th, he says, "The treaty proposed to be imposed upon Meer Roostum and Meer Nusseer Khans, rests, for its justification, upon the assumption that the letters said to be addressed by Meer Roostum to the Maharajah Shere Sing, and by Meer Nusseer Khan to Beebruck Boogtie, were really written by those chiefs respectively, and that the confidential minister of Meer Roostum did, as is alleged, contrive the escape of the Syud Mahomed Shureef"* Here are Lord Ellenborough's motives as stated by himself There is his defence—he has chosen his ground and he must stand on it This was perfectly understood by Sir Charles Napier, who, in a letter to the Governor-General, of the 17th November, says, "The whole proceedings towards the Ameers now depend, as I construe your decision, upon three things —1st Is the letter of Meer Nusseer Khan, of Hyderabad, to Beebruck Boogtie, an authentic letter or a forgery? 2nd Is the letter of Meer Roostum Khan, of Khyrpoor, to the Maharajah Shere Sing, an authentic letter or a forgery? 3rd Did Futteh Mahomed Ghoree, confidential agent of Meer Roostum Khan, of Khyrpoor, assist in the escape of Mahomed Shureef?"†—These are the three points, and how does the general dispose of them? The first letter, that alleged to be written by Meer Nusseer Khan, of Hyderabad, is about as vague as native letters generally are, but if it were genuine, it would seem to indicate that the Ameer had fomented movements hostile to the British cause, and that he meditated shaking off his connec-

* Correspondence, page 472

† Ibid. page 486

tion with British Government * But its genuineness cannot, as it seems, be proved The seal, the great evidence of its authenticity, is pronounced, by certain witnesses, to be that of Meer Nusseer Khan, but then Sir Charles Napier measures the details with a pair of compasses, and it is found that they do not correspond with those of the seal known to be in use by the Ameer. This would seem to discredit the letter, for an inscription upon a seal is not a shifting thing, in which the letters are sometimes of one size and sometimes of another, with variable distances between them But as the half-starved apothecary, Lampedo, had a remedy, even though soul and body were divorced, so Sir Charles Napier has one for this awkward flaw in the evidence against the Ameers It “ is accounted for by the circumstance (said to be notorious), that the Ameers have two seals.”† Now it seems that the fact of their having two seals was not positively “ notorious”—it was only “ said to be ” so ;—and thus the rumour of a rumour is the ultimate evidence upon which this charge rests Was this a sufficient ground for such a proceeding as that which Lord Ellenborough founded upon it—even though strengthened by the declaration of Sir Charles Napier, “ that no one has a doubt of the authenticity of the letter ?”‡

The second point relates to the letter of Meer Roostum of Khypoor, referring to a supposed treaty between that prince and the ruler of Lahore With regard to this letter, Sir Charles Napier says, there are doubts on the mind of Major Outram whether the Ameer was privy to it or not, but that it certainly was written by his confidential minister, and bore the Ameer’s seal,§ and he concludes, that Lord

* See Correspondence, page 440 † Ibid page 486 ‡ Ibid

§ Mr Clerk, British Envoy at Lahore, to whom this was, with some other letters, transmitted, doubted of their authenticity See Correspondence, page 478

Llendenborough will hold, that Meer Roostum must be responsible for the acts of his minister. He was right in concluding that such would be the decision of the Governor-General, but this system of making the prince responsible for the act of his minister is a reversal of the old doctrine, that the minister is responsible for the acts of the prince. We have seen how one of the Ameers was dealt with as to evidence. Now we have another sentenced to equally severe treatment on account of a letter which there is not the slightest proof that he ever saw.

The third point relates to the escape of an insurgent leader from the custody of the British authorities, and the evidence, if it be worthy of belief (which is not quite certain), proves that the aforesaid confidential minister was in correspondence with him, but, as in the former case, there is nothing to implicate his master.

Such is the evidence collected by Sir Charles Napier, with regard to which he observes: "If I have your lordship's answer, saying, that you consider the above sufficient to act upon, I shall lose no time in proposing your draft of the new treaty to the Ameers."* His lordship did think it sufficient, and Sir Charles was instructed to act.

He did act, and a strange and disgusting combination of vile intrigue and unjustifiable violence marked his course. Meer Roostum, the unhappy chief of Khyrpoor, had a brother, named Meer Ali Morad, who was anxious to supplant him. It seems that, by the established rule of succession, he would have succeeded to this dignity on the death of his brother, though the latter had a son, but he was unwilling to wait. Sir Charles Napier lent his countenance to the designs of Meer Morad Ali, promised him the support of the Governor-General,† and the result was, that the chiefship (the turban it is somewhat affectedly called) was trans-

* See Correspondence, page 486

† Ibid page 515

ferred to the usurping brother. He was desirous of something more, having obtained the chiefship prematurely, he wished to divert the line of succession in favour of his own family. "The rightful heir at Ali Morad's death is his nephew, the son of Meer Roostum"* These words are Sir Charles Napier's. But Ali Morad wished his own son to succeed, and a British officer does not shrink from asking a British Governor-General whether or not this could be accorded. What says the Governor-General? He shall not be misrepresented, he shall speak for himself. "I shall therefore gladly see established the right of primogeniture in the direct line, and this you may, if you deem it advisable, communicate to Meer Ali Morad, and I have little doubt, that once established in the possession of the turban, with our support, he will be able, with the concurrence of a majority of the family, to establish the more natural and reasonable line of succession to the turban, and clothe the measure with the forms of legality, but recognizing, as I do, Meer Ali Morad as the successor to Meer Roostum, according to the present custom, whereby the eldest son of Meer Roostum is superseded, I could not at once recognize the eldest son of Meer Ali Morad as his successor, in contravention of the very principle upon which his father's rights are founded"† Most straightforward and righteous policy! The rights of the heir cannot be invaded openly and immediately, but they shall be undermined—they shall be attacked secretly and by degrees. This is the policy of a British Government in the nineteenth century of the Christian era! Can the annals of the most depraved of native states furnish any thing more crooked, despicable, and base than this?

Chicane requires time—violence is more prompt. Sir Charles Napier had wormed Meer Roostum out of the

* Correspondence, page 511

† Ibid page 512

chiefship, and prevailed on the poor old man ("poor old fool" the general calls him *) to surrender himself to the usurper of his rights† Lord Ellenborough approved the

* See Correspondence, page 509

† Sir Charles Napier subsequently endeavoured to shew that he had nothing to do with the transfer of the turban. In a paper drawn by him and which appears in the Supplementary Correspondence relating to Sindh, pp 114, 115, he says, "when I heard that he [Meer Roostum] had resigned the turban to Ali Morad I disapproved of it and Mr Brown will recollect my sending Ali Morad's vakeel back to him with this message. I even recommended him to return the turban and merely act as his brother's lieutenant." Again in a letter to the Governor General in Council (page 116), he says, "I assuredly did not press the abdication of the turban by Meer Roostum, nor did I ever advise it." Sir Charles Napier, however, admits (page 111) that he ever advised Meer Roostum to seek the "protection" of his brother and be guided by him, though he boasts as follows.—"I gave Meer Roostum the option and invitation of coming to my camp and putting himself under my protection. He says further, "by my advice, which, let the reader observe, was not given till it was asked, I secured to Meer Roostum the honourable and powerful protection of the British Government. This he did not choose to accept—he went to his brother."

With reference to these statements, nothing more is necessary than to quote Sir Charles Napier's words from the first volume of Correspondence relating to Sindh. At page 510, we find him reporting a proposed escape of Meer Roostum to his (Sir C N's) camp, on which he observes, "I DID NOT LIKE THIS, AS IT WOULD HAVE EMBARRASSED ME VERY MUCH HOW TO ACT, BUT THE IDEA STRUCK ME AT ONCE THAT HE MIGHT GO TO ALI MORAD, WHO MIGHT INDUCE HIM (AS A FAMILIAR ARRANGEMENT) TO RESIGN THE TURBAN TO HIM * * * I therefore secretly wrote to Roostum and Ali Morad, and about one o'clock this morning I had an express from Ali Morad to say, that his brother is safe with him." Again, at page 515, Sir Charles Napier writing to the Governor-General, after adverting to a particular view which he entertained as to the policy of the Ameers, says, "This made me venture to PROMISE ALI MORAD YOUR LORDSHIP'S SUPPORT IN HAVING THE TURBAN, which your Lordship has approved of. The next step was

step, and on the day which among his countrymen is eminently one of peace and good-will, recorded his approval. On Christmas-day, 1842, he wrote to Sir Charles Napier, "I entirely approve of all you have done and express your intention of doing."* But the course of events did not run smooth. The degradation of Meer Roostum, according to Sir Charles Napier, "burst upon his family and followers like a bomb-shell." Alarmed at what they witnessed, and not knowing what to expect next, they fled towards Emaun-ghur, a fortress situate about a hundred miles within the great sandy desert separating Sindé from Jessulmair. What did the British general? He determined to follow them with an armed force, in order to prove, as he says, "that neither their deserts nor their negotiations can protect them from the British troops;"† —be it remembered, we were at peace with the Khyrpoor state—"war has not been declared,"‡ observes Sir Charles Napier, "nor," he continues, "is it necessary to declare it." The people of Sindé, it seems, were not entitled to the benefit of any of those principles which have been established for the regulation of hostile proceedings between nations, and which serve to distinguish civilized warfare from mere brigandism. The general is fond of calling them barbarians, and he seems to have treated them as something even lower than barbarians. To the beasts of the forest—animals *feræ naturæ*,—the sportsman allows what is called "law," the unhappy Sindians were allowed none. Sir Charles Napier marched, he arrived at Emaun-ghur, and on arriving, coolly determined to "blow it down"§. He

to secure him the exercise of its power now, even during his brother's life. This I was so fortunate to succeed in by PERSUADING MEER ROOSTUM TO PLACE HIMSELF IN AII MORAD'S HANDS."

* Correspondence, page 512

† Ibid page 516

‡ Ibid page 515

§ Ibid page 528

was fortified in this determination by reflecting that the fortress belonged to Ali Morad, who consented to its destruction. It is, however, by no means clear that it belonged either to Ali Morad or to the man whom he had manœuvred out of the turban, the real owner seems to have been Meer Mahomed Khan. But, waving this point, how came it to belong to Ali Morad, if belong to him it did? This question it is unnecessary to answer here, for the reader will not have forgotten. Twenty thousand pounds of powder were found in the fortress. This was employed in its destruction, Lamm ghur became a heap of ruins, and this was the act of an ally during a period of peace. During a period of peace did this same ally take forcible possession of the districts of Subzuleote and Bhoonghara, and give them over to the Nawaub of Bhairulpore, as long contemplated, and then came a conference between Major Outram and the Ameers, reported most dramatically in the Blue Book,* in which, though the commissioner maintained a bold front, relying on the army that was rapidly approaching, the Ameers had clearly the advantage in regard to fact and argument. They referred to the last treaty concluded with them, by which the British stood pledged never to covet any portion of the territory or property of the Ameers,—but in vain Nusseer Khan denied the letters which formed the ground for one of the charges, and called for their production, but this too was vain—they were with the Governor-General. He referred to the ease with which seals are forged, and reminded the commissioner that he had himself called for the punishment of a person who had forged his. The commissioner answered that the handwriting had been identified. The Ameer repeated his disclaimer of any knowledge of the letter, and demanded, “Why was not the paper shewn to me?” Ay, why? Does he obtain a satisfactory

* Correspondence, pages 534, et seq

answer? Yes—if the following be satisfactory. “These are points which it is not for me to discuss.” No, discussion was not the object, truth was not the object, right was not the object—but the wrenching from the Ameers of power and territory. Even this might perhaps have been accomplished at once, but for a false move on the part of Sir Charles Napier which it was now too late to retract. This was the treatment which Meer Roostum had received “Why was he deposed?” demanded the Ameers, and the answer was, that he resigned of his own free will. What says “the poor old fool”* to this? “By the general’s own direction I sought refuge with Ali Morad (here he produced the letter directing Meer Roostum to place himself under Meer Ali Morad’s protection, and to be guided by his advice), who placed me under restraint, and made use of my seal, and compelled me to do as he thought proper *Would I resign my birthright of my own free will?*”† Thus much we learn from the report of the British commissioner—much more we might know had we a report on the other side. This appears from his own statement—“Lest my memory should have failed me, I read the above to Captain Brown, who accompanied me. He says *it embraces every thing that was said on my part, but that much which was said by the Ameers in defence of themselves, and especially on behalf of Meer Roostum Khan, is omitted, that I did not consider necessary to enter more in detail*”‡

Why should more than one side be heard—especially as the commissioner declined discussion, and told the Ameers—“The question is whether or not you accept the new treaty?”§

On the 9th Feb they did accept the treaty, by allowing

* See Correspondence, page 103

† Ibid page 535

‡ Ibid. page 536

§ Ibid page 535

their seals to be affixed to a written pledge to that effect. On the 12th, the majority personally applied their seals to the treaty itself. On that day, Major Outram thus wrote to Sir Charles Napier —“ These fools are in the utmost alarm in consequence of the continued progress of your troops towards Hyderabad, notwithstanding their acceptance of the treaty, which they hoped would have caused you to stop. If you come beyond Halla (if so far) they will be impelled by their fears to assemble their rabble, with a view to defend themselves and their families, in the idea that we are determined to destroy them, notwithstanding their submission ”* The event shewed that the Ameers were not such “ fools ” as Major Outram thought them. Sir Charles Napier answered, “ I shall march to Syudabad tomorrow and next day to Halla, and attack every body of armed men I meet ”† Major Outram, however, judged rightly as to the probability of resistance being offered, should the British general continue to advance. The scandalous wrong done to Meer Roostum was working like leaven in the mind of the Beloochees, and the Ameers expressed to the British commissioner their apprehensions that they should not be able to control them. On the 15th, the British Residency was attacked, and on the 18th, Sir Charles Napier achieved the brilliant victory of Meanee. It would be useless to pursue the subject further, the result is known, the Ameers became prisoners, and their territory the prize of the English, if that can be called prize which has hitherto been only a source of disease to our brave troops, and a heavy burden on the Indian finances.

Almost as useless would it be to discuss the conduct of the Governor-General and his chosen agent. The facts

* Supplementary Correspondence relative to Sind, pages 35, 36

† Ibid. page 40.

speaking for themselves. Yet one or two questions must be asked. How far are the means by which Lord Ellenborough pursued the conquest of Sind consistent with his vapouring declarations of desire for peace? And how far is the annexation of Sind to the British territory consistent with his position, that the Indus was one of the natural boundaries of India?

Of the justice of the entire proceeding not a word need be said. The rulers of Sind had always been suspicious of us, they seem to have had a presentiment that our alliance boded them no good. We forced our friendship—so called—upon them. We dragged from them one concession after another. We overran their country with our armies, and finally we took the greater part of their territories, and gave the rest away. And then we talk of treachery and ill-feeling on their part. Could there be any other than ill-feeling? What says the Governor-General himself?—"That they may have had hostile feelings there can be no doubt, it would be impossible to believe that they could entertain friendly feelings"* It certainly would—we had injured them too deeply to confide in them—too deeply it seems to forgive them.

The cant about the misgovernment of the country under the Ameers, and the improvement which will attend our administration, is altogether beside the question. Supposing it all true in point of fact, what then? Are we to go about in the spirit of knight-errantry to redress the grievances and avenge the wrongs of all the oppressed people in the world?—and if not, why is Sind selected? We might find employment in this way nearer home. What think they who thus talk of sending an army to Poland, to recover it from the yoke of the Emperor Nicholas? What say they

* Supplementary Correspondence, page 1.

commissary, and the parliamentary resolution in his favour amounts to this To this extent too the Court of Directors and the Proprietors of East-India stock concurred in praising his lordship But why are Lords and Commons, and Directors and Proprietors, alike silent with regard to Sindé? Above all, why are Lord Ellenborough's friends silent? Why do they not challenge that, which never was withheld before under similar circumstances? Alas! alas! his lordship's reputation "dies," and his friends "make no sign" Bitter, most bitter, must have been the duty imposed by Parliament upon his lordship of conveying to the army those thanks, in which he was not permitted to have even the smallest share

Affghanistan and Sindé furnish the field upon which Lord Ellenborough's reputation is to be established, if established it can be On his policy in minor matters there is not room to dwell, but his conduct in regard to the Mahratta state, subject to the House of Scindia, is too extraordinary to be altogether passed over In 1803, the British Government concluded a treaty of peace with Scindia In 1804 this measure was followed up by the conclusion of a treaty of alliance and mutual defence This was near the close of the administration of the Marquis Wellesley. The Marquis Cornwallis, who succeeded to the administration of the government, disapproved of the latter treaty, which, indeed, had been virtually annulled by the conduct of Scindia himself, who, after it was concluded, had pursued a course of hostility against the British Government, in coalition with another Mahratta chief, Holkar, had held the officers and dependents of the British residency in durance, had plundered their camp, and committed many other acts of violence A new defensive treaty of amity and alliance was concluded in 1805 By this treaty, the earlier of the

two treaties above referred to—the treaty of peace of 1803—was recognized, and every part of it not contravening the new treaty of 1805 was declared to be binding. But no notice was taken of the treaty of alliance and mutual defence of 1804, that was passed over, and was obviously regarded as defunct. In 1817, another treaty was concluded, the immediate object of which was the suppression of the Pindarrie freebooters. This treaty refers to the treaty of peace—that of 1803, and to the treaty of defence, amity, and alliance—that of 1805, and it is declared that the provisions of those two treaties, so far as they were not affected by the treaty of 1817, shall remain in full force. An engagement (not sufficiently important to be called a treaty) relating to the maintenance of a body of auxiliary horse, and their payment, was made in 1820, and thus matters rested till the year 1843, when Junkojee Rao Scindia died. That chief left no son, but his nearest male relative, a boy about eight years of age, was adopted by the Ranee (the widow of the deceased prince), and raised to the throne. The years of the Ranee, however, did not greatly outnumber those of her adopted son. She was under thirteen, and though this is a far riper age in Asia than in Europe, it was obviously necessary to commit the government to some one better qualified by age, as well as sex, for its management. A regent was accordingly appointed under the immediate influence of the British Government, but in the conflict of intrigues which prevailed at Gwalior, as at all native courts, he fell, after retaining his post only about three months—the authority which had set him up wanting resolution to maintain him. Every thing done by Lord Ellenborough was by fits, and, as might have been expected, the cold fit was succeeded by a hot one. After a time, a

military force was assembled, and the Governor-General accompanied its advance towards the river Chumbul. Here his lordship's usual obstinate wrongheadedness continued to govern him. He was desirous of enforcing the conclusion of a new treaty, and in all probability he might have effected his object without bloodshed, could he have been content to postpone crossing the Chumbul, a measure repeatedly pressed upon him by the British Resident at Gwalior, but to no purpose. His lordship resolved to cross the river, and he did cross it. The result, as is known, was, that the British army may almost be said to have been surprised by the enemy, and though the Governor-General's object was attained, it was not without some very severe fighting. It seems as though Lord Ellenborough's evil genius was always with him, and that whenever he did any thing not wrong in itself, he was sure to make it wrong by some adventitious absurdity. Passing over the minor follies of the Gwalior expedition—the wooing “golden opinions,” by the personal distribution of golden mohurs on the field of battle, after the fashion of the hero of a Minerva press romance—passing over this and other pretty sentimentalities of the like nature—let us look at the ground taken for the proceedings in which these were interesting episodes. The interference of the British Government was ~~rested on the~~ “treaty of Boorhampoor”—the treaty of 1804—which had never been acted upon, which in fact was a nullity from the beginning, and all reference to which had been studiously excluded from the engagements subsequently formed. Yet, upon this obsolete treaty, which for thirty years had been looked upon, and justly, as a dead letter—which was a waste sheep-skin, and nothing more, does Lord Ellenborough ground his policy,* and in the

* See Proclamation, 20th Dec. 1843.

treaty concluded with Scindia on the 13th January, 1844, this said treaty of Boorhampoor, though it had been substantially disavowed by later engagements between the two states, is formally revived and declared to be binding. Either Lord Ellenborough was ignorant of the state of the engagements existing between the British Government and Scindia, or, knowing them, he, from mere wilfulness, recalled into active existence and operation a treaty long before consigned to the worms, and by the revival of which no good object could be attained, though some embarrassment might possibly result from it. Let Lord Ellenborough's friends choose on which horn his lordship shall be impaled. If they choose the latter, they will have another task before them—to reconcile Lord Ellenborough's disregard of treaties in Sind, whenever they stood in his way, with his extreme reverence at Gwalior for every thing bearing the name of a treaty, whether in force or not in force, obsolete or operative, dead or alive.

We have now traced Lord Ellenborough through the more important acts of his government. We have seen him quailing before the difficulties which confronted him in Affghanistan, week after week, and month after month, calling on the generals to retire, leaving the prisoners to the tender mercies of the enemy, and the name of Great Britain to become a bye-word and a scoff. We have seen him, when prevailed upon, with great difficulty, to suffer the officers commanding to make an effort to avert these fearful results, meanly shaking off all responsibility, and like an adept in the science of betting, making up his book so as to have a chance of winning something, while he should be secure, as he supposed, from the possibility of loss—so shuffling his cards, that whichever might happen to turn up, he should be safe. We have seen, that for the final triumph which

crowned the British arms in Affghanistan, not one jot of praise is due to his lordship, except so much as may be claimed for affording the means, a quantum meted out both by Parliament and the East-India Company with a stinted precision, which places the honour on an equality with the noted Cambridge distinction of the "wooden spoon." We have seen his mad proclamation about the gates of Somnauth, and have glanced at the frightful consequences which might have followed this frenzied ebullition of vanity and folly. We have given a passing notice to the scarcely less foolish proclamation in which he reviled the policy of his predecessor, declared the Indus one of the natural boundaries of British India, and, as he had before done in England, pronounced peace to be the main object of his administration. We have observed how this limitation and this boast were illustrated by his lordship's conduct in regard to Sind. We have seen him there intent not on peace but on conquest. We have followed him through the various steps of his aggressive policy, till we have found the reputation of the British nation for honour and good faith tarnished as deeply as would have been the military character of our country had the dictates of his lordship's judgment been allowed free scope in Affghanistan. We have seen him sometimes ordering, sometimes sanctioning and confirming by his after approbation, a series of measures utterly unjust in themselves, and calculated to render the British Government an object of hatred and suspicion to every native state throughout the East. Who shall trust to a British alliance while the memory of Sind and Lord Ellenborough's policy there endures? When that great man, whose glory will be to future ages the landmark of our time—when the Duke of Wellington, then Sir Arthur Wellesley, during his distinguished service in India, was remonstrating against

what he conceived to be an undue extension of an article in a treaty which he had concluded with Scindia, he said, "I WOULD SACRIFICE GWALIOR, OR EVERY FRONTIER OF INDIA, TEN TIMES OVER, IN ORDER TO PRESERVE OUR CREDIT FOR SCRUPULOUS GOOD FAITH." Shortly afterwards he asks "What brought me through many difficulties in the war and the negotiations for peace? THE BRITISH GOOD FAITH, AND NOTHING ELSE."* And where is that faith now? Wrecked on the sands of Sind, by the recklessness of the man to whose keeping it was intrusted Lord Ellenborough seems, indeed, to lay claim to some forbearance because he had no very definite instructions for his guidance,† but did he want instructions to induce him to act with common justice and honour? Was good faith in his eyes a thing to be maintained or not, according to circumstances, with reference to which he was to look for instructions? Instructions to observe good faith!! When a traveller, reputed to be an honest, respectable man, is about to proceed on a journey, would any one deem it necessary to say to him, "Now, mind how you conduct yourself, do not pick a fellow-passenger's pocket in the railway carriage, nor knock down and plunder any solitary traveller that you may meet in an evening walk." On matters of policy, his lordship might look for instructions—on matters where plain honesty was a sufficient guide, he surely might be expected to be "a law unto himself." We have seen that however reasonable this expectation, it was not fulfilled—but that pusillanimity inconceivable in an English nobleman in regard to Affghanistan was succeeded by a course of tyranny and oppression in Sind,

* Letter to Major Malcolm, 17th March, 1804 (Wellington Despatches, Edition 1837, vol. iii. page 168)

† See Supplementary Correspondence, page 100

from which the unsophisticated mind of an English labourer would recoil. Lastly, we have seen that even in a very ordinary matter, that of dealing with the affairs of Scindia, his lordship manifested so lamentable a degree of incompetency as evinced him to be utterly unfitted for the high office which he so unworthily filled. Here, as in Sindé, he had recourse to violence, when every object which he could lawfully seek might have been attained by skilful negotiation. Incompetency to an extent almost inconceivable—despondency under difficulties—braggadocio swaggering when there are none—cowering fear when danger seems to threaten—reckless disregard of justice and good faith when the feeble are to be coerced—indiscretion extreme and uncontrollable, with scarcely a lucid interval—indiscretion associated with, but not constrained by, a considerable portion of that low and unstatesmanlike quality, cunning—indiscretion so monstrous, that men lift up their hands in astonishment at its manifestations, and wonder whether he who has perpetrated such things can be in his right mind—these are the qualifications of Lord Ellenborough for the office of Governor-General of India, as developed throughout the period during which he abused that most important office, and they are crowned by arrogance so unbounded that it would be ludicrous even in a Cæsar or a Napoleon. Lord Ellenborough was recalled, shall we ask why? The only question will be, how was it that this step was not taken earlier? To this only a conjectural answer can be given. We may ascribe something to the forbearance of the Court of Directors, founded on a hope that their wild and wandering Governor-General might settle down into a state of mind better befitting his position—something to the fact that the more important political correspondence is known in the first instance to those Directors only who form the Secret

Committee, and that they are under the obligation of an oath of secrecy—something to the desire of the Court not to embarrass her Majesty's Government. But at least no one can fairly say that the step was taken too soon. The evidence before the public is amply, and more than amply, sufficient to justify it, there may be much more of which the public are ignorant, there may even be reasons for the recall of which they have no suspicion. But whether there be or not, the Court of Directors stand acquitted of having exercised their power capriciously or unjustly. Nor in the absence of all evidence ought it to be concluded that they exercised it violently or suddenly. We are not to suppose that the Court met one day, and passed a resolution of recall without any previous notice to her Majesty's ministers of their feeling towards the Governor-General. We are in perfect ignorance as to the fact in this respect, but as the Court of Directors are, and always have been, cautious, almost to a fault, we cannot believe that on so important an occasion they cast aside this their peculiar characteristic.

Lord Ellenborough was recalled, and the last scene of his varied performances was equal to any that preceded it. Some military officers belonging, it is understood, to both services—the Queen's and the Company's—thought fit to soothe his lordship's wounded feelings by inviting him to an entertainment given in his honour. What view military men may take of this step we know not, but it is yet within the memory of living men, how civilians regarded the design of some officers of the army to express an opinion favourable to their commander-in-chief, when his conduct had been subjected to accusation. What said the late Mr Whitbread? He said—"Sir, general officers ought to know that they owe obedience to the state, and that they have no more right to assume the functions of a

deliberative body than the privates of the army or navy". The Secretary-at-War, who was connected with the proceedings of the officers, came forward anxiously to declare that those proceedings "had no reference whatever to the circumstances of the present moment, or to what was now passing in that house"† Mr Canning, a cabinet minister, spoke more directly to the point, admitting that the proceeding of the officers "could not be approved of,"‡ and that it was calculated to injure the illustrious individual whom it was intended to serve. On a subsequent day, the subject was again adverted to, and Mr Canning, repeating his former expression of disapprobation, added that "if there did exist an attempt on the part of any military officers to protect the Duke of York against the House of Commons, a more culpable idea never entered into the head of man"§ No one ventured to defend the meditated proceedings. Ministerialists and oppositionists united in the opinion that it was most improper. Apply this universal judgment of the House of Commons to the conduct of the officers at Calcutta. The two cases are not precisely parallel, but the points of difference tell against the Indian admirers of the disconsolate Governor-General. The Duke of York was himself a soldier—Lord Ellenborough is none. The Duke of York's conduct was under inquiry by the House of Commons, the conduct of Lord Ellenborough had been inquired into by the Court of Directors, and condemned in a manner the most formal, authoritative, and severe. The officers who proposed to bear testimony to the merits of the Duke of York were not servants of the House of Commons, they were bound to respect both Houses of Parlia-

* Hansard's Debates, vol. xiii page 700

† Hansard, vol. xiii page 707

‡ Hansard, *ut supra*

§ Hansard, vol. xiii page 744

ment, but they were servants of the Crown. A large portion of those who rushed forward to condole with Lord Ellenborough are directly and immediately servants of the Court of Directors, and all were acting under a Government which derives its authority from that Court.

Of the conduct of Lord Ellenborough's hosts, however, let military men judge, but what shall be said of that of his lordship in accepting the invitation? Is his appetite for flattery so inordinate that he cannot restrain it even under circumstances where a regard for others, if not a regard for his own dignity and consistency, might have been expected to induce him to forbear? So it appears, for, regardless of the embarrassment which he might possibly occasion to those whose cheers he was begging, his lordship, still writhing under the punishment which had just descended upon him sought, amidst blazing lights, and smoking dishes, and flowing wines, and prolonged hurrahs, to assume an impudent air of defiance towards the authority whose just displeasure he had incurred. And there his lordship panned the army, as if the army of India needed any praise from him, "I shall soon be far from you," said his lordship—according to the *Indian News*, 4th October, 1844—"I shall soon be far from you, but my heart remains with the army, and wherever I may be and as long as I live I shall be its friend"—as if it could be of the slightest consequence whether he were its friend or its enemy. He did not mention that he left part of the army in a state of mutiny—the crime having its origin in his measures. As his lordship is somewhat given to the sentimental, we must not criticise the declaration that his heart remained with the army—but why with the army alone? could he not spare one morsel of sentiment for the Indian millions whom he had been sent to govern, and who were now to lose him—

or did he think that they would benefit by the change? Then his lordship talked, it seems, of “two years of victories without a single check,”—so says the report, but surely it cannot be correct, where would have been part of those victories, if his lordship had not for once given up his own judgment to that of others? “Two years of victories without a single check,” he says. He forgets—not without a single check, there was a check to the career of the armies in Affghanistan given at the outset, and by his lordship himself—something like what Malthus calls “a preventive check,” it was happily removed, and then began the course of victory of which his lordship boasts, as if all were owing to him. But the exhibition made by his lordship is so truly lamentable, that pity takes place of indignation in contemplating it. He had lost one of the highest and most honourable posts to which a British subject can aspire, but he had the satisfaction of being for one evening again a lion, of walking up a flight of steps bedizened with lamps and laurels to partake of a dinner where he was the “observed of all observers,” of seeing a transparency representing a besieged town, and of reading the softly soothing sentence—“Ellenborough, farewell!” and let us hope that for three hours he was happy.

Yet, even for the sake of such a dinner, and such a transparency, and such an inscription, and such cheers, it is not to be imagined that any future Governor-General will follow the example of Lord Ellenborough. His name will be a beacon suggestive of danger. Should any of his successors be likely to fall into errors like his, the recollection of his fate may give timely warning to eschew them. In this respect, though rarely exercised, the power of recall by the Court of Directors is a most valuable security for the good government of India. The Court are never likely to exercise

it without very sufficient cause, their discretion and moderation have been shewn by the infrequency with which they have resorted to it, as have their firmness and sound judgment, by not shrinking from its use when justly called for.

As for the idle babble about depriving the Court of this power, it is not worth a moment's notice. The idea of committing a power of any kind to any person or number of persons, and then upon the first occasion of its being exercised turning round in great astonishment and great wrath, and depriving them of it, is too ludicrous for discussion, it can provoke nothing but laughter. To say that it is anomalous that the Court should possess this power is nothing—the entire government of India is anomalous according to the notions of scholastic legislators. No philosopher in his closet would ever have framed such a plan of government as that to which India is subject, and under which it prospers. It has grown up under the pressure of circumstances, like that of Great Britain, and though widely different in construction, is equally well adapted to answer its purpose. The value of a form of government is to be determined with reference not to symmetrical proportion, but to practical utility. If the Court of Directors are fit to appoint a Governor-General, surely they are fit to decide upon his removal. The two powers seem in common sense to go together. The right of choosing an agent involves the right of dismissing him when he ceases to give satisfaction to his principal.

But there is another consideration. Under the Act 3rd and 4th William IV, cap 85, the members of the East-India Company gave up a vast amount of property, and suffered another portion to remain at interest, chargeable on the revenues of India, on certain conditions. One of these conditions is, that they shall retain, through their representatives, the Court of Directors, the administration

of the government of India The mode in which the government is to be carried on is laid down in the Act by which the respective rights of the various parties interested are defined, and the limitations under which they are to be exercised prescribed Among the rights expressly recognized as appertaining to the Court of Directors, is that of recalling any Governor-General, or other officer in India (except appointed by the Crown), and this right is to be exercised without control of any kind Here is a most important security for the proprietors of East-India stock The safety of their dividends is involved in the prosperity of India, and the permanence of its connection with this country. They elect the persons through whom the government of India is carried on, and those elected are endowed with very large powers, among the most important of which is the right of removing any public servant in India, from the Governor-General downwards This is the chief, the most efficient—the only efficient security which the Indian stockholder enjoys So long as it is possessed, the instructions of his representatives, the Court of Directors, cannot be set at nought with impunity

And does any one talk of taking this power away? What, get possession of people's property under a solemn agreement that they shall have a certain security, and then tear the security from them? Their dividends indeed may still be secured nominally upon the revenues of India, but their control over India through those who represent them is virtually at an end when you deprive the Court of Directors of the power of putting a stop to misgovernment in that country, and substantially the security is void

“ You take my house when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house ”

What would be said of a mortgagor who, after agreeing that the management of the mortgaged estate should be

vested in certain persons to be named by the mortgagee, should seek to get rid of the obligation, and at the same time to keep the money? The legislature indeed may do this—that is, they have the physical power of doing it, as they have of doing many other things which no one in his wildest imaginings ever supposes they will do. They may deprive the great Captain of our country of the estate bestowed on him by a nation's gratitude, and consign his honoured age to penury. They may apply the sponge to the national debt—burn the books, and shut up that part of the Bank of England devoted to its management. They may—all the estates of the realm concurring—abolish the two Houses of Parliament, and convert the Government into a despotic monarchy, or, the Crown consenting, they may establish a republic. Any of these things they *may* do—but no one expects that they will. Neither will they take away that power which is a security at once to the proprietors of East-India stock for their property, to the people of India for good government, and to those of England for the safety of England's noblest dependency. We are not inquiring what a repudiating legislature might do, but what the legislature of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland will do, and of this much we may rest assured—that having deliberately made a solemn compact, they will keep it.
